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Art Rambles in Shetland.

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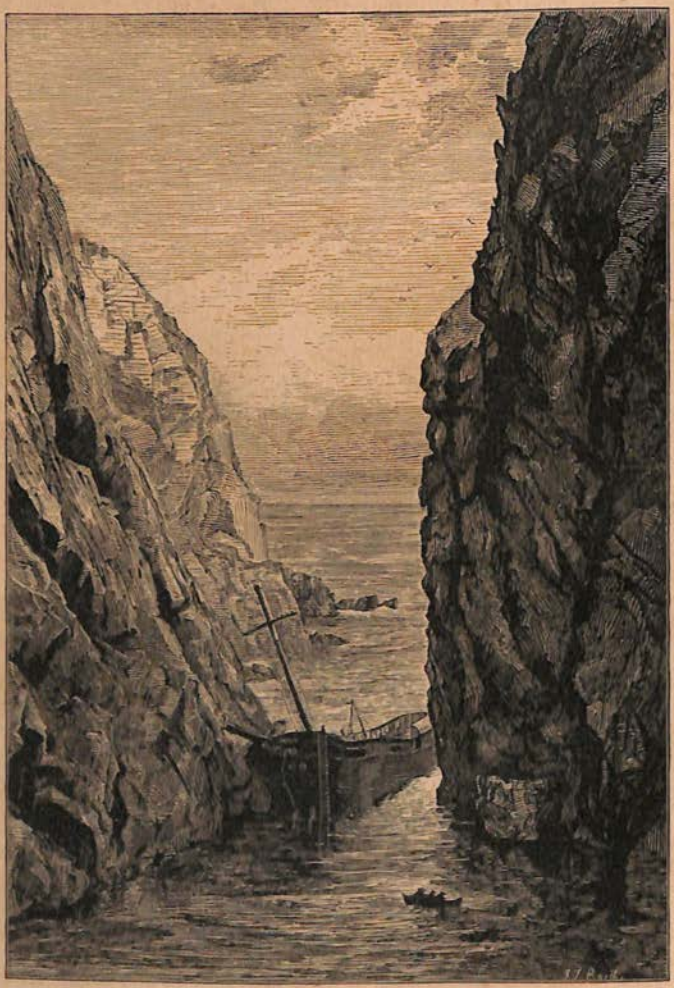
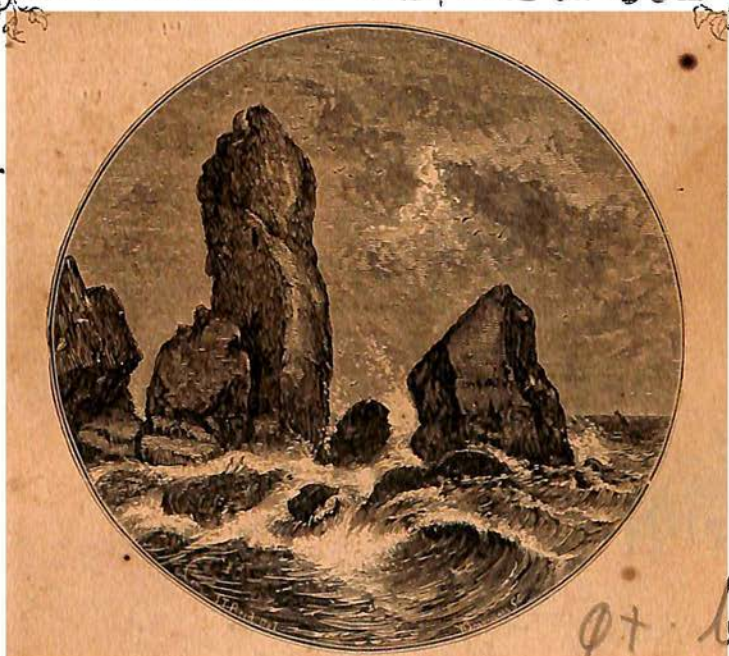


WRECK OF THE LESSING, OF BREMEN, AT SHELDIE CLIFF FAIR ISLE.

ART RAMBLES IN SHETLAND



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BY JOHN T. REID.

"Here rise no groves, and here no gardens blow,
Here even the hardy heath scarce dares to grow;
But rocks on rocks, in mist and storm array'd,
Stretch far to sea their giant colonnade.
With many a cavern seam'd, the dreary haunt
Of the dun seal and swarthy cormorant,
Wild, round their rifted brows with frequent cry,
As of lament, the gulls and gannets fly,
And from their sable base, with sullen sound,
In sheets of whitening foam the waves rebound." SCOTT

EDINBURGH: EDMONSTON AND DOUGLAS.
1869.

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To

The Right Honourable

Thomas Earl of Zetland, K.T.,

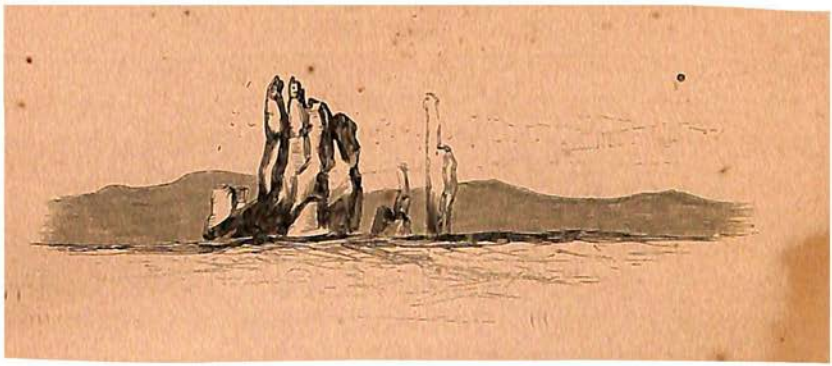
Baron Dundas,

THIS VOLUME

is respectfully dedicated

BY

JOHN T. REID.



PREFACE.

IT is the hope of the Author of the present volume that his Readers may derive some new pleasure, if not some new information, from the fruits of a labour which has been a very enjoyable one to himself.

Intelligent admirers of the beautiful in Nature do not confine their interest to one type of beauty: the stern has its attractions for them as well as the sweet. To such it ought to be a matter for congratulation, that there is afforded them, within the circuit of their own country, so unique and varied an exhibition of all the grander and wilder things in scenery as is afforded them in the Shetland Islands. The Author is not without a hope that he may contribute something to the interest in these Islands which has been recently awakening here in the South, and that he may put it into the heart of a few to traverse for themselves the sublime, if comparatively desolate, region which he tries to bring nearer to their homes.

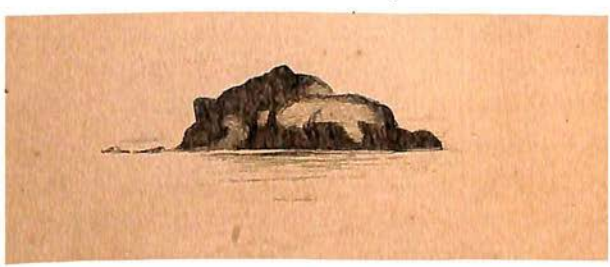
None, probably, will realise so fully as himself, the scanty justice which he has been able to do to the scenery in the various processes of representation through which the illustrations have had to pass. It may be some security for general accuracy, however, that the views have been carefully drawn on the wood by himself from sketches he took on the spot.

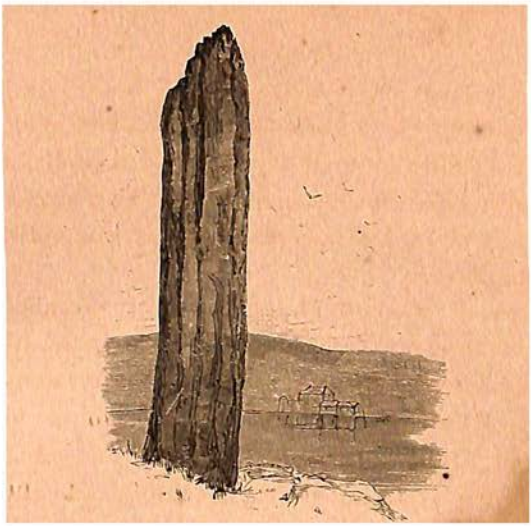
Without affecting to be a guide-book to Shetland, or an exhaustive account of the Islands, or even a panoramic reproduction of every feature of interest within their domain, he will be disappointed if the Reader fail to find in his volume a certain combination of the merits of all the three.

The literature of Shetland is not extensive. To those, however, who may desire more full information concerning the Islands—with more or less reference to the scenery—there may be commended the elaborate work of Dr Hibbert (1822, now rare), and the "History" of Dr Edmondston (1809). The most recent work of general Shetland interest is a volume of poems, "Lichens from the Old Rock" (1868), by Mrs Saxby, an accomplished islander, who very well appreciates the scenery of her native region, and loves its quaint customs and weird superstitions.

It only remains that the Author acknowledge, with much thanks, the obligations under which he lies to his friends the Shetlanders, for the hospitality and kindness which he has experienced at their hands, during his sojourns on their rocky shores.

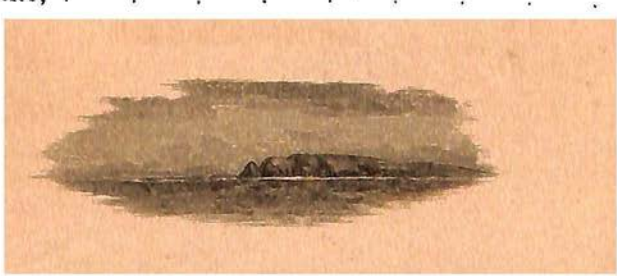
2 George Place, Leith Walk, Edinburgh,
May 10, 1869.

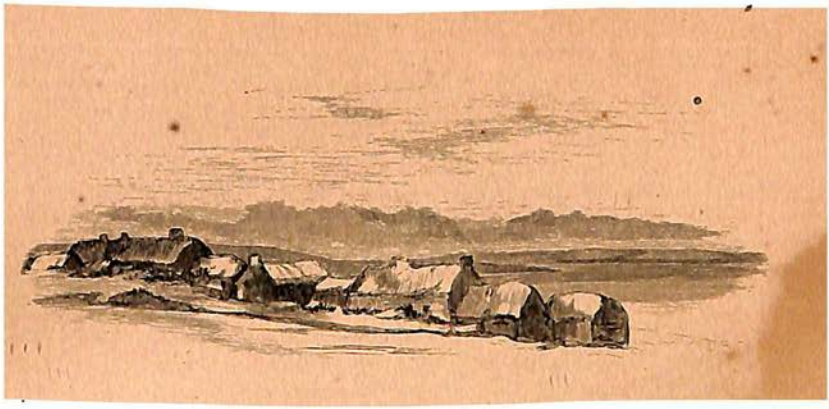




Contents.

CHAP.		PAGE
I.	LERWICK,	1
II.	BRESSAY AND NOSS,	7
III.	HILLSWICK,	12
IV.	MELBY AND PAPA STOUR,	21
V.	FOULA,	28
VI.	NORTH ISLES,	35
VII.	SCALLOWAY AND SUMBURGH,	42
VIII.	FAIR ISLE,	48
IX.	MANNERS AND CUSTOMS,	54
	GLOSSARY,	63





List of Views.

WRECK OF THE "LESSING" OF BREMEN, AT SHELDIE CLIFF, FAIR ISLE, *Frontispiece.*

LERWICK, ... *facing page* 1

BRESSAY SOUND, ... 2

EVENING VIEW OF LERWICK, . . 2

PICTISH CASTLE, NEAR LERWICK, . 5

THE NOUP OF NOSS, ... 7

ST MAGNUS BAY, HILLSWICK, . . 13

BLOW STACK, HILLSWICK NESS, . . 15

HEADS OF GROCHEN, HILLSWICK, . 15

THE DRONGS, FROM THE POINT OF HILLSWICK NESS, . . . 16

MIDNIGHT SKETCH OF RONA'S HILL, FROM HILLSWICK, . . . 16

THE DRONGS, ... 18

DORE HOLM, NEAR TANGWICK, NORTH MAVEN, ... 19

GRIND OF THE NAVIR, NORTH MAVEN, 20

MELBY, ... 21

BUSTA, ... 21

HOLM OF COLLASTER, NEAR MELBY, . 22

THE COAST, DEEP DALE, NEAR MELBY, 23

REAWICK, ... 27

INTERIOR OF A FOULA COTTAGE, *facing page* 29

GADA STACK, FOULA, ... 31

NORTH COAST OF FOULA, . . . 33

WHALSEY, ... 35

BROUGH LODGE, FETLAR. . . . 35

BALTA SOUND, UNST, ... 36

HAROLDSWICK, UNST, ... 36

LOCH OF CLIFF, UNST, ... 37

MUCKLE FLUGGA LIGHTHOUSE, UNST, . 38

BLUE MOOL SOUND, ... 39

EVENING SKETCH OF MUNESS CASTLE, UNST, ... 39

OLD CHURCH, MID YELL, . . . 41

COTTAGES NEAR SCALLOWAY, . . 42

SCALLOWAY, ... 42

OLD MILL, SCALLOWAY, . . . 43

SUMBURGH HEAD, ... 44

FITFUL HEAD, DUNROSSNESS. . . 45

VIEW OF SUMBURGH, ... 46

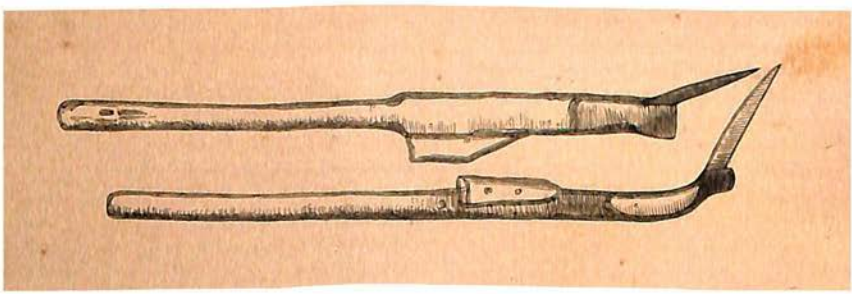
MOUSA CASTLE, ... 47

CROW STACK, FAIR ISLE, . . . 48

SHELDIE CAVE, FAIR ISLE, . . . 53

LETTERPRESS ILLUSTRATIONS.

AULD WIFE O' NIDDISTER, . *Title-page.*
THE DRONGS, FROM THE SEA, . PAGE vii
OSSA SKERRY, NORTH MAVEN, . . viii
STANDING STONE NEAR UYEA SOUND, . ix
HORSE OF BURRA VOE, EAST YELL, . ix
OLLABERRY COTTAGES, . . . xi
TUSHKAR, ... xii
THE KNAB, LERWICK, ... 1
THE ANDERSON INSTITUTE, LERWICK, 6
FERRYMAN'S COTTAGE, BRESSAY, . 7
THE CRADLE OF NOSS, ... 9
SOUTH-EAST COAST OF BRESSAY, . . 11
DORE HOLM, ... 12
ST MAGNUS' KIRK, ... 12
THE DRONGS, ST MAGNUS' BAY, . . 15
STENNIS, ... 20
MAIDEN STACK, ... 21
THE HORN OF PAPA AND THE VAE SKERRIES, ... 24
MANSE OF WATSNESS, ... 27
ROCKS NEAR REAWICK, . . . 27
FOULA, FROM THE HILL ABOVE SCALLOWAY, ... 28
A FOULA COTTAGE, ... 32
FRIAR ROCKS, FOULA, . . . PAGE 34
RUINS OF AN OLD KIRK, NORTH YELL, 35
OLD CROSS, NORWICK, ... 37
MORNING SKETCH OF MUNESS CASTLE, 37
GLOUP HOLM, ... 39
GREEN HOLM AND RAMNA STACKS, . 40
U.P. CHURCH AND MANSE, OLLABERRY, 41
SCALLOWAY CASTLE, ... 42
TIRL OF A ZETLAND MILL, . . . 43
RUINS OF JARLSHOFF, ... 45
VIEW OF SUMBURGH HEAD FROM THE SOUTH-WEST, ... 47
FAIR ISLE FROM SUMBURGH, . . 48
SHEEP CRAIG, FAIR ISLE, . . . 50
OLD ROUND-HEADED CROSS, NORWICK, UNST, ... 53
SKETCH OF TREES ON DR EDMONDSTON'S GROUNDS, UNST, ... 54
A COTTAGE, WALLS, ... 59
BOX-BED, ... 60
SHETLAND SPADES, ... 62
OLD SQUARE-HEADED CROSS, NORWICK, UNST, ... 63
DIAGRAM OF THE ISLANDS, . . . 64



LERWICK.

THE KNAB, LERWICK.

ART RAMBLES IN SHETLAND.

CHAPTER I.

A FEW days after the wreck of the Shetland mail-steamer, *Prince Consort*, in May 1867, I sailed from Leith for Lerwick on board the schooner *Matchless*, "a splendid clipper," now in a hale old age, yet of so graceful a build, and kept so trig and tidy, that she looked more youthful than many a younger sister that had seen fewer winters and sailed over calmer seas.

A Shetlandic atmosphere pervaded all; for, manned as she was by a Shetland crew, everything—provisions, topics of talk, dress, and manner—gave unmistakable indications of a very intimate connection with the isles of the Far North. The conduct of the crew was most exemplary: during the passage I heard neither an oath nor an angry word. The captain, being a humane man and a Christian, treated his men with as much kind consideration as if they had been his own sons; while they in turn took pleasure in attending to his every wish. It was his wont to have worship nightly; and

even in stormy weather, when their bark was ploughing through a troubled sea, labouring to outride the storm, all, with the exception of the man at the helm and another at the look-out, found their way aft to the cabin to join in their evening devotions.

A strong easterly breeze was blowing as we struggled down the Frith of Forth, and the uncomfortable pitching of the vessel quickly compelled our female passengers, two young damsels, to seek refuge below, not again to appear on deck till we were safely anchored in "Bressay Sound," five days afterwards. Nor did I wonder that they scarce knew their native town, and thought it wondrous bleak, contrasted with the coast of Fife, which they had last beheld, with its patches of rich verdure, tree-clad hills, stretches of yellow sand, and picturesque fishing-villages, with their groups of red-tiled cottages brightened with "glints" of sunlight. For, compared with the "naked, melancholy isles of farthest Thule," even "Caledonia, stern and wild," might justly be regarded as the "sunny south."

Being becalmed in our passage, we were for a whole day drifted about with the tide provokingly near Arbroath. The proximity to "Fairport," however, was not without its compensation, as suggesting the incidents of "The Antiquary;" hence leading our thoughts by an easy transition to the kindred story of "The Pirate," the tale which has its scene laid in the islands for which we were bound.

After a pleasant passage, we at length arrived in Bressay Sound, and about six in the morning anchored off Lerwick.

In the clear and frosty air all objects wore a peaceful, even a grave aspect; yet there was a strange fascination about those weird old rocks, and

> "The houses all hoary and gray,
> Washed by the barren sea spray,"

standing knee-deep in the water, with a very fleet of little boats and yachts anchored a few yards from the doors; for, Venice-like, a great many of the houses are built in the water, and have a door to the sea as well as to the street. We announced our arrival by firing a gun, whose report loudly echoed through the silent town. Immediately many heads, adorned with Fair Isle night-caps, were to be seen popping up out of skylight-windows, to ascer-

BRESSAY SOUND.

EVENING VIEW OF LERWICK.

tain who thus disturbed their repose. My attention was next attracted by some half-dozen boats coming off from the little jetties that jut out from the shore, their crews pulling as if for their lives. They came alongside of us almost in a heap, pushing, shoving, quarrelling for places, and making a terrible row. It surprised me that all this did not result in some of their frail-looking boats getting "stove-in" or upset. One of the men in each boat, after it was made fast, jumped on board and rushed about in search of a *fare* in the shape of a passenger and his baggage; and, as a rule, the boatman who then takes you ashore considers he has a right to you during your stay in Lerwick. He will call daily to see if you wish to have a boating excursion, and is deeply offended if you employ another.

On landing at the principal pier, a jolly little boatman, with cheeks as bright as a ripe cherry, who offered to board or lodge me, ushered me into his house to look at his accommodation for strangers,—viz., one small room with a two-storied box-bed, the under compartment of which was let, and the tenant of it was just crawling out, cautiously, to avoid hitting his crown on the upper story, where the host said I should have to sleep; and he further hinted that a strange bedfellow might at times turn in along with me. As this somewhat novel arrangement did not suit me, I searched elsewhere, and found comfortable quarters at Mrs Slater's, next door to the post-office; of whose homely lodging-house I may say, as said Professor Blackie of "Dame Mackenzie's," near John o' Groat's House—

> "London may boast dear inns and grand hotels,
> But comfort here, with kindness, cheaply dwells."

There are several comfortable lodging, or rather boarding-houses, in Lerwick; and last summer an enterprising hotel-keeper rented a block of buildings fronting the sea, and opened a commodious hotel, which is a great boon to tourists and travellers. He likewise has a variety of machines on hire, and good horses; so that parties may drive as far as the road will allow, (north to Hillswick, and south to Sumburgh,) and thus see much of the mainland without undergoing the fatigue of travelling long distances on pony-back.

Lerwick has one main street running parallel with the edge of the water,

and on each side houses, shops, and warehouses are built, with the utmost disregard of everything and everybody save the convenience of the individual proprietor. Thus one gentleman from his front window has for a view his neighbour's gable; and some houses are planted in the centre of the street, rendering it in parts so narrow that two people can scarcely walk abreast with any degree of comfort. It is all paved with flag-stones, and numerous narrow bye-lanes lead up to the carriage-road on the Hill-Head; while shaggy little *shelties*, with well-balanced loads of peat, walk leisurely alongside of the foot-passengers, following women, who, while bearing a like burden, are ever busily engaged knit, knitting at what seems the never ending stocking.

The shopkeepers, termed "general merchants," are not without claims to the title, for in one establishment you can purchase an immense variety of articles, including groceries, hardware, breadstuffs, clothing, and articles of ship-chandlery, &c. Knitting shawls, veils, stockings, &c., from the wool of the native sheep, so remarkable for silky softness and warmth, is the chief employment of the large female population of the country, and an important trade exists in the barter of these articles to the merchants for tea, sugar, bonnets, dresses, &c. They are rarely, if ever, paid for their work in money, so they take from the merchants just what they can get,—thus tea-drinking, with the older dames, has grown to be almost a vice; while the love of gay dress has been fostered to an inordinate degree in many of the young knitters. On Sunday they emerge from their smoky huts *à la mode du beau monde*, dressed all of them like brides; and meeting them thus gaily decked, you could not imagine that they lived in such hovels, were it not that they perfume the air around them with a strong odour of peat-reek.

In Lerwick there are eight or ten places of worship, and no lack of schools. The town now boasts a first-class educational establishment, the Anderson Institute, endowed by the late Arthur Anderson, Esq., a native of Lerwick.

To the stranger, Lerwick forms a convenient head-quarters, being the *rendezvous* of the sailing packets, which leave weekly for the different islands, on the day after the departure of the mail-steamer. Within the last few months a steamer has begun to ply twice a-week between Lerwick and the

PICTISH CASTLE—NEAR LERWICK.

North Isles; while of boats there is no end, and so near that in some cases you might drop into one out of your window—a beautiful arrangement, whereby an enthusiastic bather might, with the aid of a rope, and without the trouble of dressing, enjoy a delightful plunge while the Lerwegians are still slumbering.

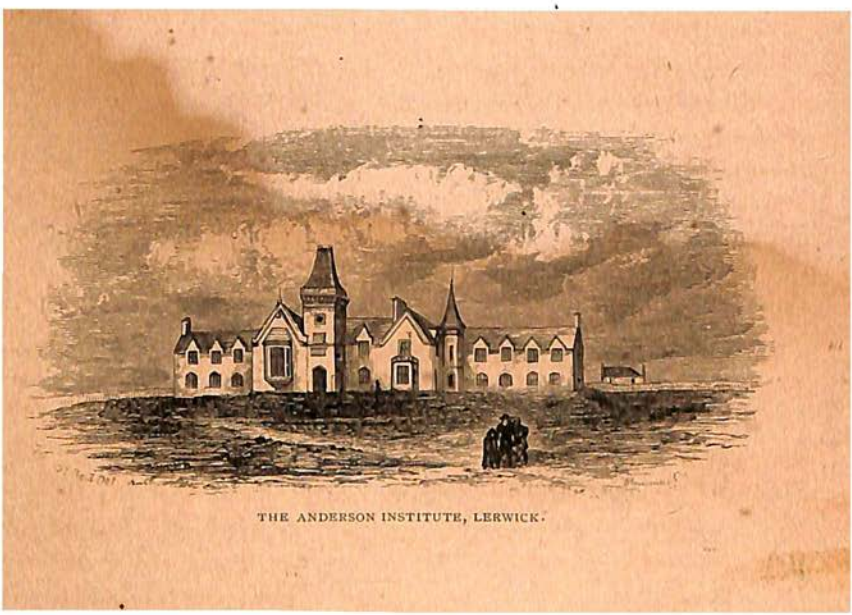
It is not known precisely when Lerwick was founded, but Brand relates that in 1700 it contained between two and three hundred families; and that thirty years before that, it contained only four houses. It is supposed to derive its name from Larwick, a small town near to the Naze of Norway. Doubtless it owes its prosperity, if not its existence, to the near proximity of Bressay Sound, which forms a safe and commodious harbour, where fleets, consisting of about one hundred sail of men-of-war, have repeatedly anchored.

The lions of the town are few, and may be seen in a forenoon. The museum contains a fair collection of birds and geological specimens, with a variety of curiosities from foreign parts. The fort or citadel, supposed to have been built during Cromwell's *régime*, was rebuilt by Charles II. in 1665, in the time of war with Holland; but at the peace, both guns and garrison were removed, and, left in this defenceless state, it was burnt, along with several houses in town, by a Dutch frigate, in the year 1673. In 1781 it was completely restored, and named, after the queen of George III., Fort Charlotte. It now mounts several cannon, where the Naval Reserve are wont to practise; and the barracks are occupied by a few Coastguardmen, and serve as custom-house, county court-room, and prison. From Brand's faithful account* of all he saw, heard, and thought of the Shetland Islands, I learn that the Lerwegians, desirous to give their fort a fierce look, fished up out of a ship, sunk eighty years before, three huge cannons, and to divest them of the coat of rust, kindled a great fire of peats, when, the guns becoming heated, all three went off, to the bewilderment and consternation of all.

About half a mile from Lerwick, in a valley, and close to the sea, is Clikamin, a small fresh-water loch, in the centre of which are the ruins of one of the circular burghs so numerous in the Shetland Isles. It is built on an islet, and connected with the shore by a row of stepping-stones.

* Published at Edinburgh, 1703.

Within its walls are several separate chambers, about ten or twelve feet long by three wide, and underground passages. In this loch, in summer, numbers of boys sail their miniature boats; here likewise the Baptists baptize their converts; and by its banks the Lerwegians are wont to have their larger washings, stamping their blankets, after the Scotch fashion, with their feet, and drying them over the drystone dikes.



THE ANDERSON INSTITUTE, LERWICK.

THE NOUP OF NOSS.

FERRYMAN'S COTTAGE, BRESSAY.

CHAPTER II.

DISCOVERING that little dependence could be placed on Shetland weather, and that days suitable for out-door painting were strangers compared with the days of fog and wind and rain, I used often to select a dull rainy day for travelling, hoping thus to enjoy more of the sunshine while sketching. For this reason I crossed Bressay Sound one disagreeable afternoon, amid a down-pour of rain, intent on visiting the island of Noss. Having to walk to the other side of Bressay, I left the road and scampered on, over heath and bog and stony hill, passing Pictish burghs, and monumental stones that have outlasted the traditionary accounts of the events they were erected to commemorate, and lakes so old and dead-looking, that they seemed but the shadows of lakes that once were. On reaching the ferryman's cottage, his wife informed me that he was out fishing; she signalled the shepherd, who chanced to be tarring his boat on the opposite beach, to come for me, mentioning in commendation of that worthy, "he's a Shetlander, and nane o' thae Scotch bodies!" The Sound, though narrow, is often boisterous and quite impassable. With hearty vigour he ferried me across, and as I had a letter to him from his master, the enterprising Scotch farmer who rents the island for pasturing sheep, he and his wife left no stone unturned whereby they might minister to my comfort. They had what Shetlanders term a "*sma'*" family, or a family of young children, and dwelt alone in this little island. A few yards from his door are the ruins of an old

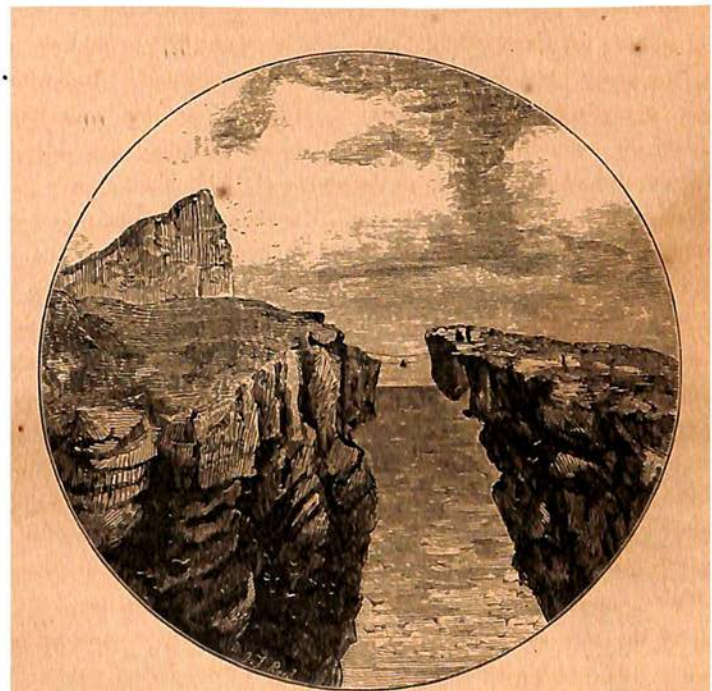
chapel, and at another part of the island I traced the ground-plans of cottages now no more, where once were fishermen's homes, on whose hearths the fire of wreck-wood had doubtless blazed, as the merry prattling children have danced around its glare, waiting the return of "*da*" from the sea with his *budie* of *piltocks* for the evening meal. I was astonished to find the coast of Noss in many parts literally beached with wreck-wood. And who can tell how many tempest-tossed barks contributed to this miscellaneous assemblage of splintered timbers, wafted thither by successive tides, long after the ocean had hushed for ever the voices of each gallant crew?

Following the coast-line to the south, I passed an old mill, under whose shattered roof a few sheep sought partial shelter; and beneath the rocks jutting out to seaward were curious caverns, whose arched eaves were swept by the searching waves, and tenanted by numerous prickly-backed spherical creatures, known as the *Echinus*, or sea-hedgehog. To us ascending the hill, numbers of gulls soaring over a particular spot indicated our approach to the far-famed "Holm of Noss." On this holm we saw the stakes where the cradle is hung; and I heard from my companion the shepherd, "the oft-told tale" of the Bressay man who, more than two hundred years ago, induced by the promised reward of a cow, climbed to the top of that fearful rock, which rises from the sea perpendicularly (in parts overhanging) to a height of one hundred and eighty feet, and fixed them there. He despised to avail himself of the safe means of communication with the main rock he had at so great a risk established, and attempting to descend that giddy cliff, he fell and perished.

The holm is tenanted by an interesting colony of the herring gull, and used to be visited twice in the season for the eggs and young *scories* (gulls in their first year), which latter form a dainty dish when properly cooked, quite equal to chicken-pie. However, this is not the case with the old gulls, one of which I tried for dinner when living in the island, but can say little in commendation of its flavour or tenderness.

In connection with the cradle, I heard of a singular mishap which befel a person who crossed to the holm by means of it, packed it with a choice collection of young scories, and got in on the top of them to make the return journey. Unfortunately, when half-way over the fearful abyss, the bottom

of the cradle gave way, the poor young gulls, not yet able to fly, went down like a shot, and the gentleman, clinging tenaciously to its sides, reached the opposite bank in rather a nervous condition.



THE CRADLE OF NOSS.

By dint of climbing, the summit of the Noup is reached, and as, from that

> "Steep and dreadful precipice,
> The frighted traveller casts down his eyes,
> And sees the ocean at so great a distance,
> It looks as if the skies were sunk beneath him."

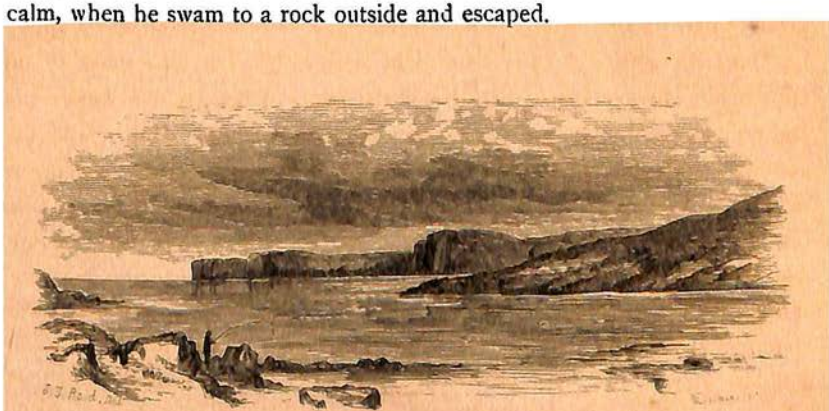
Strange sight! to gaze from such a vantage-point and see the untold myriads of the tribes of air floating 'tween sky and sea, even as a snow-shower in a wintry day. Still stranger sounds! to listen to their rude and melancholy screams, and hear the ever-varying strain of that wild harmony, whether it gently soothes as the plaintive music of the Æolian harp, or swells

as the hum of a busy city just roused from slumber by the dawn of day, or bursts on the ear as with the angry voice of the tempest.

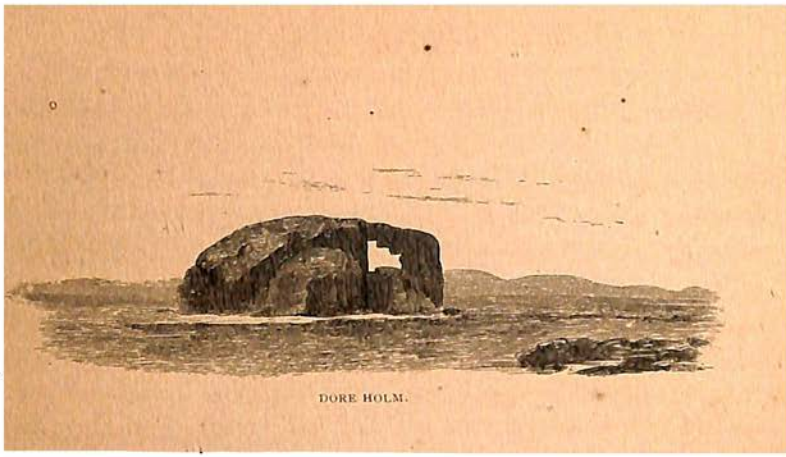
After a stay of a few days I left for Lerwick one morning early, to have a long day's sketching of the coast of Bressay, but had not travelled far when it could only be seen through a haze; and those great dark rocks, protruding from, and magnified by, their mist-shrouds of looming vapour, had a weird-like look and features of sublimity as the watery wreaths were wafted on the breeze, showing transient glimpses of the coast. Having wandered by the edge of the cliffs till the fog grew so thick I could only see a very few paces before me, and not knowing well my position, it was with difficulty I found my way to the spot where I had appointed a Lerwick boatman to wait for me. Advancing to what appeared natives carrying *keyshies* of peats, they proved to be either shelties or native sheep; and cottages from whose roofs I was certain I saw the smoke ascending, proved but peat mounds and little heaps of stones. After walking many miles, I reached an apparently boundless stretch of water, and having supposed it to be the sea, was at a loss to understand the complete absence of the ceaseless motion that in the calmest day breaks in well-timed cadence on the sea-beat shore. On a few objects becoming familiar to my eye, it dawned upon me that I had walked repeatedly round a small fresh-water loch. At darkening, long past the time when the boatman was to wait me, I reached the trysting-place, and as he was not now there, I strayed along the shore, anxiously listening for the plash of oars on the water. The darkness ever thickened, and I had almost lost hope of getting a boat that night, when, roused by the noise of my approaching footsteps, one of the fair daughters of Bressay rose before me, and revived my hopes; she was waiting the return of her brother, who had gone out with a neighbour man to the piltock fishing, for the purpose of helping them to pull up their boat. When the boat arrived, I saw that her brother was a mere boy of twelve, and the neighbour man rather an old fellow, who, on hearing my proposal, looked sagaciously into the mist and shrugged his shoulders. At last, the intercession of the fair one, who volunteered to take an oar herself, if he could not get a man to venture out with him in so hazy a night, prevailed, and be agreed; and, in search of a man, we entered several cottages, and found the natives busily engaged in making short work of an anker kettle of fish and potatoes, the kettle forming the dish

common to all, while Nature's knives and forks were doing active service. The children were squatting on the floor, beside the pigs and dogs, which were looking out keenly for their share of the feast, and patiently waiting to have the kettle to clean. Here, and often subsequently elsewhere, I was astonished at the number of people that could be stowed away in their small cabins. In one I counted eleven, five of them grown women, and wondered that cases of suffocation are not frequent. A box-bed, with the lid closed, and three or four sleeping in it, must be almost as bad as the Black Hole of Calcutta. At length a dark-visaged individual, who scanned my exterior closely, no doubt to see what fare he might expect, agreed to go, and at midnight I was landed on a pier at the south end of Lerwick, receiving a hearty shake of the hand from both of the boatmen.

Those who wish to see Bressay to advantage should go by boat round the south of the island, where the action of the weather has given the lofty cliffs the appearance of exquisite masonry, round Noss, and reach Lerwick by the north entry, not omitting to visit the Orkneyman's cave, where on turning a corner the sight of daylight is lost in an immense subterranean chamber, surrounded by giant pillars of fantastic spectral form, only to be seen, and then but dimly, by the aid of a glare of reflected light. It is so named because an Orkney sailor, hunted about by the press-gang, took shelter there. He found a footing inside the cave, but in his haste neglected to secure his boat, which being floated out with the ground-swell, left him a prisoner till the sea became calm, when he swam to a rock outside and escaped.



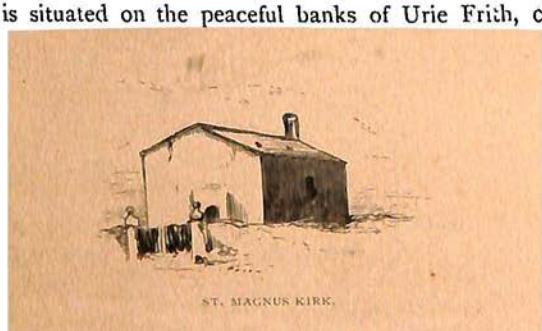
SOUTH-EAST COAST OF BRESSAY FROM THE SHEPHERD'S COTTAGE AT NOSS.



DORE HOLM.

CHAPTER III.

THE west coast of Shetland is much bolder and more picturesque than the east; and Hillswick, where dwelt "bonnie Mary," of whom Claud Halcro sung, forms an attractive centre, encircled by a galaxy of natural beauties—grotesque stacks, precipitous holms, dark tortuous caverns, combining with hill and voe to form scenes of singular and romantic interest. Those who have visited there, beheld the wonders of the coast, and passed an evening under the hospitable roof of Mr Anderson of Hillswick House, will, I doubt not, often recall pleasantly the memory of the time there spent. His dwelling is situated on the peaceful banks of Urie Frith, close to St



ST. MAGNUS KIRK.

Magnus Kirk, and has for a distant background the red granitic mass of Rona's Hill, the Ben Nevis of Shetland.

ST. MAGNUS BAY—HILLSWICK.

Thither bound, I left Lerwick on pony-back. The morning was bright and balmy, and looking back from the summit of the Staney Hill, I saw the town, its fleet of boats, and the over-topping Wart of Bressay reflected in the mirror-like surface of the placid water.

Kate, the handsome gray mare kindly placed at my disposal for the journey, was granddaughter to a fine Arabian war-horse, presented, after having seen considerable service, to the late Sir Arthur Nicolson. Hence the origin of the famous breed of Fetlar ponies.

Two gentlemen galloped past us mounted on spirited brown shelties, and Kate started in hot pursuit, while I, being quite unaccustomed to this sort of exercise, found ample occupation in keeping my seat and preventing my baggage, like Gilpin's wig and other etceteras, from bidding me a hurried adieu. We passed close to the Knop of Kebister, or Luggie's Knowe, where dwelt the noted *varld*, or wizard named "Luggie," who, reputed to have the power of drawing fish out of the sea roasted and ready for eating, was on account of this unique accomplishment convicted of witchcraft, and burnt on the Gallow Hill of Scalloway.

On issuing from the beautiful and fertile valley of Dale, I rode through the "Windy Grind," where, even in a calm summer day, it blows a fresh breeze. From the summit of the hill is to be seen one of the fairest views in Shetland; the valley of Tingwall with its lochs and fertile farms lie stretched out below, and far in the southern distance extend Trondra, the exclusive property of the Earl of Zetland, the Burra Isles, St Ninians, and even Fitful Head, full thirty miles away. We now descend into the valley of Tingwall, and pass the loch of Strand, celebrated for its trout, and Laxfirth, where, a good many years ago, a flax-mill was erected, in which the fortunes of Shetland were to be made, but which, alas! proved an ill-advised adventure. For several miles a hilly and tortuous road is followed, passing numerous lochs on either hand, until we arrive at the entrance to the "Lang Kaim," a dismal valley where, three years ago, nought met the eye for more than six dreary miles but a boundless expanse of peat moss, with no human dwelling, however humble, to break the desolate stillness of the scene. Now, however, at the entrance to the Kaim, and close to the road, a little inn is erected, where Kate had corn, and I a comfortable tea. After resting an hour I

rode through that lone valley, discerning no signs of life save a few sheep wandering over the dreary waste, grazing on the tufts of grass that at rare intervals sparkled brilliantly among the prevailing bog and heath, nor hearing any sound save the plaintive notes of the plover.

At Voe, Olnafirth, the scenery assumes a somewhat rugged aspect. The hills are rocky and abrupt, while large granite boulders are strewn broadcast around, and a mountain burn courses over its rocky bed, now, from the effects of a recent storm, rushing in browny froth with wild impetuosity and giant leaps towards the silent depths of the voe beneath. At the top of this voe are built a few houses, with slated roofs; and the artificial beaches adjacent indicate one of the most extensive fish-curing establishments in the country. The road winds along the edge of the voe; and about six miles farther on is Busta, which has been for more than three centuries the residence of the Gifford family—a fine old mansion-house, surrounded by a goodly array of trees, stunted in height, but having trunks of from two to three feet in circumference. On a fine evening, when reflected in the voe on whose sloping banks it is built, it looks extremely picturesque, somewhat like a lordly mansion by the banks of a Highland loch.

By the time we had reached Busta, the beautiful weather that had ushered in the day gave place to a storm of wind and rain, and I was thankful to avail myself of the hospitable shelter afforded me. Next day, in spite of all the kind solicitations of my host not to venture out in such weather, I mounted to ride to Hillswick. The wind was furious, and my hat blew away beyond hope of recovery when at Mavis Grind, a romantic spot where the mainland is almost rent in twain, and a narrow band of twenty or thirty feet alone divides the Atlantic Ocean from the North Sea. The wind was dead a-head, and blew in fierce and long-continued gusts. Poor Kate was sadly tortured by the pelting showers; so much so, that sometimes she would stand stock-still, utterly unable to proceed. It was indeed an extraordinary day for summer; and as the saline spray was carried over hill and vale, impregnating the whole atmosphere, and coating the face with layers of salt, it told sadly on the crops of the poor Shetland crofters. The effects were not seen that day; but next morning I surveyed with sorrow the blighted potatoes, with blackened "shaw," checked thus early in their growth, the blasted grain, and the noble thistle,

BLOW STACK —HILLSWICK NESS.

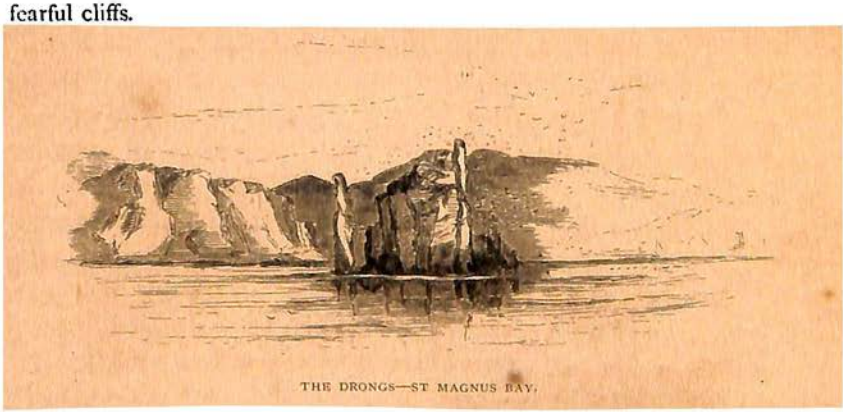
HEADS OF GROCHEN—HILLSWICK.

emblem of my country, crest-fallen, with broken stem, stooping earthward among a crowd of more ignoble weeds. When, on rounding a hill more exposed to seaward, we encountered a still fiercer blast which Kate refused to face, I dismounted, shouldered my baggage, and led Kate, who now willingly followed me with her head close under my lee side. Hatless though I was for ten miles of my journey in this pitiless storm, yet, strange to say, a disagreeable cold from which I had suffered for several days now left me entirely —an unlooked-for instance of the efficacy of the hydropathic treatment.

I appreciated very fully the comfort of the Hillswick parlour, and a seat beside the fire; for the fire is a welcome friend in Shetland all the year round. I deemed it no mean treat to gaze out from the window on the stormy sea outside,—to notice the progress of a giant billow—

> "Till, towering to a haughty height,
> With shuddering sweep
> It bursts against a bellowing rock,
> And a long ridge of white
> Rush'd o'er the sea, like furnace smoke."

And, vaguely seen above the clouds of spray, were the massive cliffs of richly-coloured granite, termed the "Heads of Grochen." Last summer a poor boy, when on a fowling expedition, met his death by falling over one of these fearful cliffs.



THE DRONGS—ST MAGNUS BAY.

The days were about their longest, and there was literally no darkness: I could therefore prosecute my studies all night long; and I often sat till almost midnight painting the Drongs,—curious out-stacks, which, like veteran

guardians of the land, stand boldly in the dominion of the assaulting surge, silent and alone; while, nearing Rona's Hill, were quiet peaceful lochs and rippling burns, and glens where the primrose flourished by the side of the ancient mill. Thus pleasantly situated, I could say with the poet Crabbe:—

"I love to walk where none had walk'd before,
About the rocks that ran along the shore;
Or far beyond the sight of men to stray,
And take my pleasure when I lost my way.
For then 'twas mine to trace the hilly heath,
And all the mossy moor that lies beneath.
Here had I favourite stations, where I stood
And heard the murmurs of the ocean flood,
With not *a sound* beside."

Words fail me to convey to my reader an adequate idea of the beauty of a Shetland midnight. Desirous to portray such a scene on canvas, I betook myself to Hillswick Ness, where I could have a good view of Rona's Hill. Urie Frith got calmer, and still calmer, as the midnight hour drew nigh; the near coast, and the far-stretching Rona, were reflected peacefully as in a lake; and it was almost impossible to realise that I sat by the side of one of the arms of the Atlantic. Shades of twilight spread over the landscape a solemn stillness, and the hills seemed to rise higher and recede farther from the eye as the light grew pale. A lonely fisherman rowed to his home near by, and smoke still curled from the thatched roofs of the slumbering cottars. The sun having dipped behind Rona, still cast a bright radiance over the sky, reflecting a mellow, luminous, silvery light, which gilded the glassy surface of the voe; but alas! the chilling dews fell heavily and fast, and shivering sensations tended to rob the scene of much of its poetry. Light thickened, and the mist which hitherto crested the fair summit of Rona now floated across the horizon on the morning breeze: touches of sunlight gilded the clouds and more distant hills, as the orb of day rose resplendent, and decked the dew-clad landscape with a glittering robe lustrous with liquid diamonds. A few birds fluttered on the wing; the cattle woke to crop their morning meal; a breeze dispelled the calm of the sea, and the rugged features of the rock-girt coast, no longer blended with the distant hills, came boldly forward, naked and unadorned, save by stray lichens, grassy roots, and the flower of the wild sea-pink.

"THE DRONGS"—FROM THE POINT OF HILLSWICK NESS.

MIDNIGHT SKETCH OF RONA'S HILL—FROM HILLSWICK.

One afternoon I climbed to the summit of Rona's Hill to have a bird's-eye peep of the Shetland Archipelago; but Shetland weather was fickle, as usual; the sunshine gave place to showers; and, after sitting in lonely exaltation on the cairn of stones that marks the highest point of the hill, patiently but vainly waiting for the dense fog that surrounded me to be dispelled, I descended, thoroughly drenched and disappointed, thus missing this famed view.

Towards the end of June is Johnsmas, an important day in the Shetland calendar. For centuries past it has been the custom for the fleet of Dutch fishing "busses" to frequent Bressay Sound at that time; and, wishing to see these strange and antiquated-looking crafts, with their highly-polished oak sides, gaily-painted bulwarks, and many-coloured flags,—a friend and I left Hillswick one evening, and walked the distance of forty miles to Lerwick in about twelve hours. So calm and lovely was the night that I could not resist the temptation to paint a midnight view of an inland lake. It was indeed the very opposite of what you shall hear was in store for me on my return two nights after. I was then alone; and unfortunately at Voe, eighteen miles from Lerwick, where two roads meet, I took the wrong one, and had walked eight miles when I overtook a solitary traveller, who informed me of my blunder. Thinking to find a short cut over the hills, I left the road and climbed along the hillside. I crossed bogs where I sank knee-deep, and had to pick my way through lonesome glens. It was now midnight, and the dark clouds veiling the sky cast deep shades of gloom over the mysterious scene. I scared groups of native sheep, and startled shelties, whose long manes, tossed about in the wind, seen in so dim a light, gave them a very grotesque, if not alarming look, while cattle gazed in mute astonishment. On reaching the top of the hill, I strained every nerve to withstand the fury of the blast, and force a passage down a dismal valley which I expected would lead me to Brae. But vain were my efforts: the wind blew so fiercely as almost to drive me to my wits' end. Great rifting bogs yawned all around, and I felt strongly tempted to lie down in one till the storm would subside. Dismal indeed is such a morass, thus rent and riven by the elements in tempestuous weather, and might serve the painter as a fit model from which to depict an ideal Valley of the Shadow of Death. Finding a sheltered nook, I scanned the prospect, anxiously looking for some familiar spot to serve as a beacon by

which I might direct my course; but recognising no feature of the wide-spread landscape, I retraced my steps, and trudged, tired and fatigued, over the weary miles, soaked by the frequent and pelting showers.

It was now Sabbath morning, and I had rather a considerable Sabbath-day's journey (twenty-six miles) before me; whereas, had I taken the right road, I might have been enjoying a refreshing sleep. I arrived at Brae (where I expected to arrive on Saturday evening) at three on Sabbath morning; but not having the heart to rouse the good folks there at such an untimely hour, I passed on, *en route* for Hillswick. The scene at Mavis Grind was terrific, from the prodigious power of the waves. Sadly foot-sore, every step being a species of slow torture, I took half an hour to every mile;—wearier miles I never travelled before. The individual characteristics of lochs and hills were graven on my memory, as I scanned their familiar features to discover how far I might be from my destination; on nearing which, the cottagers, now astir, stared at me inquisitively. I fancied, from my staggering walk, that they would consider me either drunk or demented; but learned afterwards that they surmised me to be an aged clergyman on his way to the manse; while their imagination converted the sketching portfolio under my arm into a large-print edition of the Psalms of David! At a little past nine, after a fifty-six miles' walk, I had the felicity of breakfasting once more with my kind friends at Hillswick.

I had many rambles along the cliffs north of Hillswick; and so numerous were the objects of interest I there witnessed, I fear I must dispose of them somewhat summarily, only noticing a few of the most noteworthy. The cliffs that bound St Magnus Bay are strikingly picturesque. The prevailing rock is granite, much overgrown with a variegated bluish lichen which, under the action of the sun's rays, assumes an infinite variety of tints; and a motley array of outstanding stacks fringe the coast; while, far out in the sea, the Drongs, previously mentioned, rise in solitary grandeur.

Let us forsake the coast for a while, in order that we may visit the ruins, or rather the site where once stood Cross Kirk, a noted edifice, much visited in bygone times by religious devotees. The snails that frequent this sacred edifice used to be dried, pulverised, and drunk as a cure for the jaundice. The old burying-ground is still in use; and among the tombstones there is one

THE BRONGS—HILLSWICK.

DORE HOLM—NEAR TANGWICK, NORTH MAVEN.

bearing a plain-speaking epitaph, setting forth that the death of "Donald Robertson, to all appearance a sincere Christian, was caused by the stupidity of Lawrence Tulloch, who sold him nitre instead of Epsom salts."

Regaining the coast, we pass the fine old House of Tangwick, and have a view of "Dore Holm," a detached rock, dark and forbidding in colour, and in form resembling the skeleton of a huge antediluvian monster. Through this holm the force of the waves has stormed a magnificent arch, seventy feet in height, beneath which yachts may pass in full sail. Here the black and white gull, the puffin, and the kittywake, take up their abode in vast numbers.

On mounting a gentle acclivity, we come in sight of the fishing-station of Stennis. By the side of a little bay, shielded from the fury of the waves by the island of the same name, are its rows of huts or *lodges*, ten or twelve of them built in a block, having side-walls instead of gables in common. So small are they, that they suggest dog-kennels rather than human habitations; yet in each a boat's-crew dwell for a few months in summer, generally sleeping with their clothes on, among straw, away from their homes and snug box-beds. Their wives, sisters, or daughters visit them once a-week, to get the cod-heads, small fish, and skate, for home consumption. The drying beaches were strewn with fish; and the boats, having been two nights at sea, had returned with splendid catches of cod and ling, which were being duly weighed, gutted, and salted by a staff of men and boys engaged for this service.

The coast around abounds in pictures sternly grand. The dark red sandstone rock, mantled with sable by the action of the salt sea spray, contrasts strikingly with the gay-coloured cliffs near Hillswick. The island of Stennis, the Skerry of Eshaness, and the "Maiden Stack," present scenes of unmitigated desolation.

> "For all is rock at random thrown,
> Black waves, blue crags, and banks of stone,
> As if were here denied
> The summer's sun, the spring's sweet dew,
> That clothe with many a varied hue
> The bleakest mountain side."

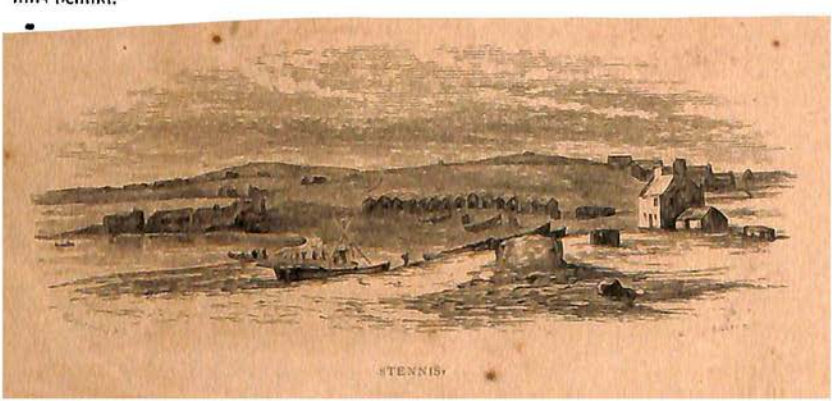
The scream of the sea-birds mingles with the sound of the tumbling deep, as the restless waves are mounting, and falling, and coursing towards the dark ledges of barren rock, bathing with fleecy folds of spray each naked precipice.

An object of much interest is a natural cannon, a small circular hole in the massy cliff, whence in stormy weather the waves, a few seconds after rushing with great force into a cave below, completely stopping up its entrance, discharge with sharp rebound a shower of spray.

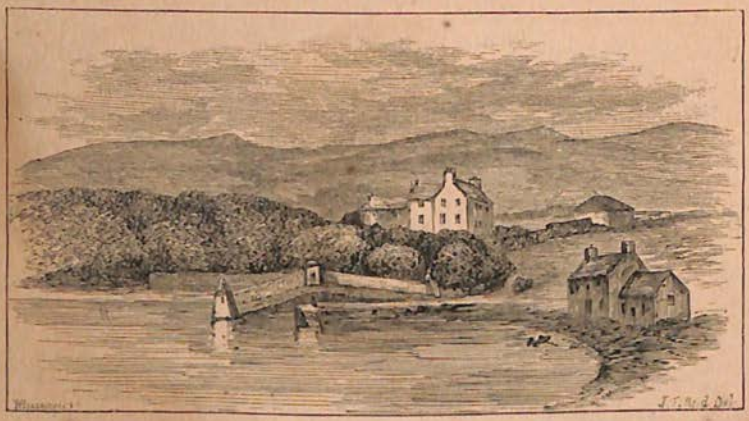
On our road to the "Grind of the Navir" are the "Holes of Scraada," two huge perforations in the land connected by an arch. Their sides are precipitous, and they reach to the sea level. Into the one nearest the coast the tides of ocean ebb and flow, after winding through dark cavernous tunnels under the solid rock, a distance of two hundred and fifty feet. And wild indeed are the cliffs around the Grind or Gate of the Navir. I am favoured with a "word-picture" of this scene, during a winter storm, by a subscriber—Andrew M. M'Crae, Esq., and with it will close this chapter.

"It is winter! The voice of the tempest is heard—no other sound. The sea-birds are cowering in their rocky homes—the fisherman has sought the shelter of his hut—the cattle have fled inland. The blinding spray is sent far over the Villions*—the waves of the mighty Atlantic are hurrying towards the iron-bound coast. See that tall billow! It rises to the skies—now with the noise of thunder it falls upon the Grind, uptearing and upheaving vast masses of rock, which it carries, like so many pebbles, to the savage shore behind, where they rest with the spoils of other storms, a shapeless heap thrown together as by the hands of Titans."

* "The Villions of Oure, near Tangwick—grassy downs between the Grind and the low hills behind."



GRIND OF THE NAVIR—NORTH MAVINE.



BUSTA.

MELBY.

MAIDEN STACK.

CHAPTER IV.

BRIGHTLY the sunbeams glinted over the sea, as on a July afternoon I bade "grey Hillswick farewell," and sailed across the Bay of St Magnus, viewing once more its guard of *out-stacks*, while the opposite coast ever revealed new and interesting scenes. One bold headland was rent by a deep fissure. There a boy was saved as if by a miracle. A fisherman left the island of Papa Stour in a tiny skiff to fish along the coast, and had with him his son, a child five or six years old. A strong current carried them out to sea, and a gale meanwhile sprung up. Bravely he pulled against it, but the gale increased to a tempest. He became exhausted in the unequal strife, the oars were swept from his grasp, and he fell back, a lifeless form. Swiftly as a feather on the breeze was the skiff driven on the billow towards the frowning crags, as if to certain doom; but God guided it, and, heaved on a monster wave, the boat with the living child was lodged safely between the steep sides of that dread chasm. A warm-hearted crofter, who dwelt near the spot, took the child thus saved to his home, and brought it up as his own.

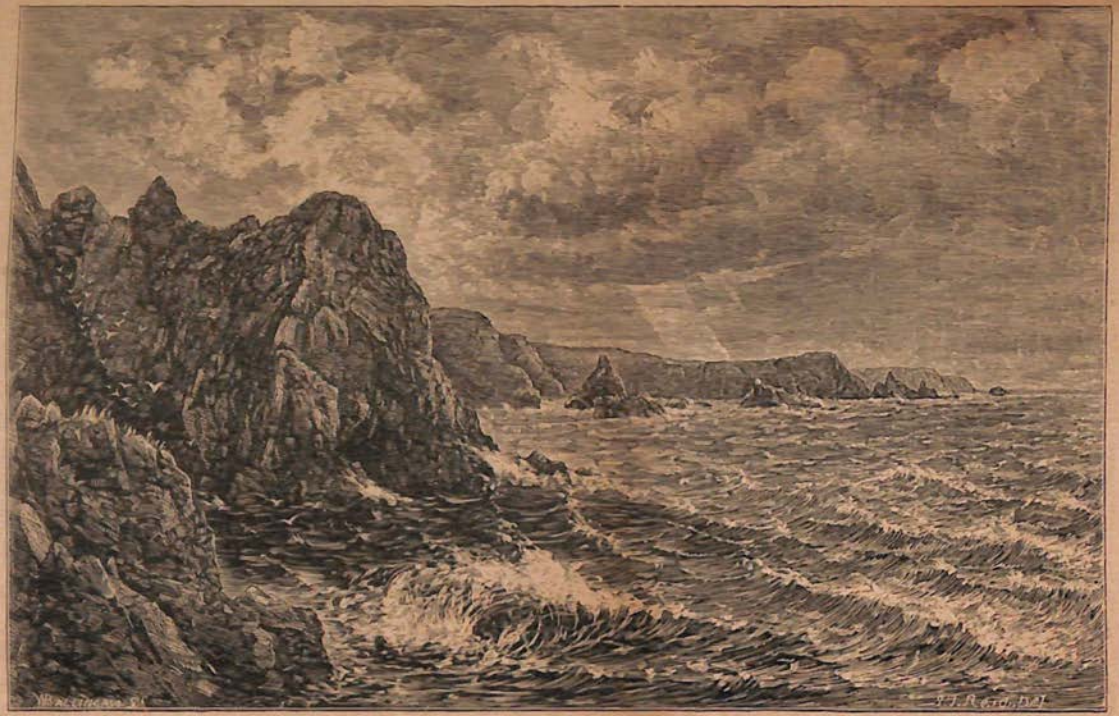
After sunset we reached a voe hemmed in by rocky hills, and met our host-to-be at the piltock fishing. His daughter, a comely lass, rowed skilfully; and that some good fortune had attended their efforts we learned at supper-time, when a large trough of piltocks, just boiled with potatoes in salt water, was placed on the table for the common weal. The mother was a curious old body, and lived very much in the past. She had quite a collection of glass photographs of sons and daughters in the colonies, over which she sighed and wept. She told me they had been wonderful "parrents," and that "their childer had grow'd up just like the corn."

Next morning, after a hearty breakfast of *brunnies* made of native meal, which is bitter, and contains a considerable per-centage of sand, I commenced a large water-colour view of the kitchen-end of the house, but the vent took fire, and quickly dispersed my models.

By walking a few miles I reached Melby House, the delightful residence of R. T. C. Scott, Esq. of Melby, where, by kind invitation, I took up my abode. The house is built on a small promontory, and commands a magnificent view of the cliff scenery which bounds St Magnus Bay.

On this estate, and within a mile of Melby House, is the "Holm of Collaster," a small, grassy islet situated in the middle of a loch. It is seventy-three yards long and thirty-five yards broad, its highest point being only about twelve feet above the surface of the water, which remains at the same level all the year round. It is the haunt of myriads of wild fowl, as it is strictly preserved by the proprietor, and the nests are sometimes left undisturbed for several successive years. Every species of gull found elsewhere in Shetland, except the Bounxie or *Skua gull*, breeds there; and the Herald Duck (*Mercus Castor*) also nestles among the wild bushes growing close to the water's edge. The Holm was last visited by the proprietor in May 1867, when eight hundred and eighty-nine eggs were carried off. After having been boiled hard, they were, according to custom, distributed among friends in Shetland and elsewhere—one box having reached its destination in Cornwall with the contents perfectly fresh and good. With reference to the "Preservation of Sea-Birds Act," recently passed, it may be remarked that there was no perceptible diminution in the number of birds in the following year.

HOLM OF COLLASTER—NEAR MELBY.



THE COAST—DEEP DALE, NEAR MELEY.

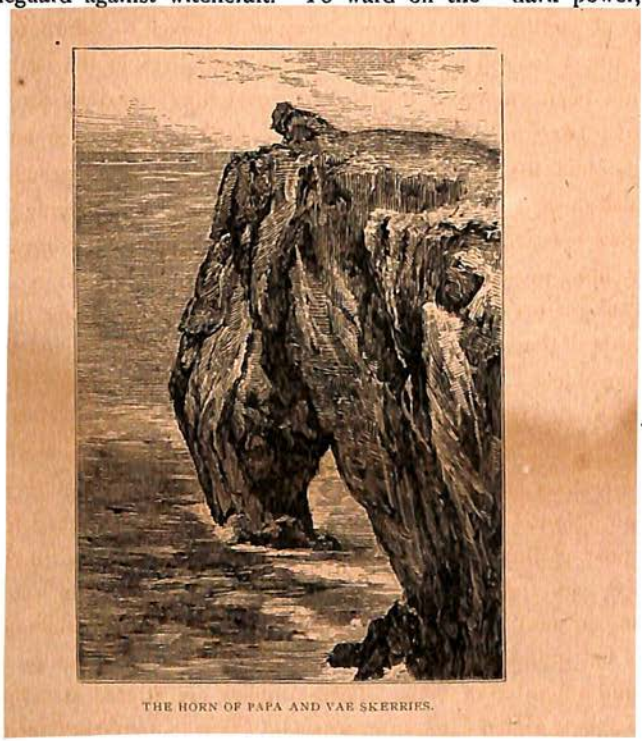
South from Melby, the rocks are abrupt in outline, rising in jagged peaks to a height of five or six hundred feet. At Deep Dale, the coast is very wild and desolate. Here, some years ago, a large vessel freighted with timber went to pieces. Those of the crew whose lives were saved escaped by being thrown upon a frightful cliff, which in a dark night they contrived to scale.

When at Melby, I hired a boat's crew to take me over to Papa Stour, an island rich in subjects for the pencil, and rich as being peculiarly adapted both by its position and natural construction for fishing purposes. It is near the ling fishing-grounds, and its shores are indented with deep voes, which form excellent and safe harbours, in which hundreds of boats and small smacks could be safely moored. It appears that immense shoals of herring pass from north to south near its shores, almost annually in July, and are frequently driven by the numerous saith, their voracious persecutors, into creeks and gios. On the morning of the last Saturday in June 1868, an immense number of sea-gulls were descried rising like a cloud from a gio called "Creed." At this signal the herring nets were sent for, and the first boat's crew that entered the gio found numbers of dead saith floating out to sea with the current, which had dashed them to death on the rocks. The gio was found to be literally crammed with herrings. All the islanders were there; and it proved a joyful day to those poor people, as, owing to the failure of their crops the previous year, many were almost destitute of the means of subsistence.

Papa Stour is likewise rich in legends. From the highest point I drew the "Horn of Papa" and the "Vae Skerries," which lie out therefrom at a distance of some miles. They are the haunt of seals, which are called *selkies* in Shetland, and which, according to popular belief, were mermen and mermaids in disguise. At night they disrobed themselves of their seal-skins, and, boasting forms beautiful beyond description, held their midnight revels in the pale moonlight, amid the surge that broke over these skerries. Many wonderful stories are told about them: they are said to have carried shipwrecked fishermen on their backs safe to the shore of Papa.

I am informed that many are still credulous of the foolish superstitions which of old were implicitly believed by all. Some almost avow their belief in witchcraft, and never hesitate to say that their milk is witched. The

fishermen consider a piece of steel or silver coin about their boat or lines a valuable safeguard against witchcraft. To ward off the "dark power," an



THE HORN OF PAPA AND VAE SKERRIES.

old razor is kept in the byre, and a piece of steel fastened to the cow's head is supposed to have a benign result. At certain times a cow will grow sick, and the idea is often entertained that she has been shot by the *trows*. A highly-valued cure, under these circumstances, is to take a cat, hold it by the tail, and scratch the cow from the tail to the head with the cat's claws, both animals being at the same time in exquisite torture. The islanders say that about a hundred years ago there was a species of supernatural beings in Papa Stour so numerous and even dangerous, that a person could not go beyond the "town-dyke" after twelve o'clock at noon. At Yule time and at weddings they would collect in such numbers as to check the progress of the strongest men, and sometimes bruise and kill them.

In Papa Stour, as elsewhere, the sparrows are very destructive to the corn, and the Papa Stourians believed that the beadle of the kirk had the power of "telling" the sparrows away so as never to return, for which they paid him a fee. The "Sparrow-Beadle" still lives in the island, though he has not been employed in his "sparrow-telling" capacity for a few years. It must have been rather an amusing sight to have seen and heard him going round the corn-fields using a variety of strange gesticulations, crying "Coosh-sh-sh, Hoosh-sh-sh awa' fra dis toon, an' never come again." The sparrows must have found his annual visit much more enjoyable than the never-failing presence of a scarecrow.

The weather prevented my either studying or depicting the wonders of the coast of Papa Stour so fully as I would have wished; but there was one singular object I was unwilling to miss, known as "Christie's Hole"—a dark cavern to the north of Hamna Voe, where the towering cliffs are literally riddled by winding vaults and caves. It was almost appalling to look down from the dizzy height of several hundred feet to the gurgling and seething caldron below. In very quiet weather it can be approached from seaward in a boat, gliding cautiously through weird, dark passages, till the "hole" is reached, with the daylight streaming down on the restless waters from the opening far aloft. Passing still inwards through another winding dungeon, a roomy but sunless recess opens out, where is a kind of beach on which are to be found a number of seals. These animals are hunted at certain times by the islanders, armed with clubs, who find the seals frequently inclined to offer a fierce but vain resistance.

I am favoured by R. T. C. Scott, Esq., with the following interesting note, descriptive of a visit paid to this curious spot forty-two years ago:—

"In the summer of 1827, the celebrated Dr Adam Clarke (to whom was due the introduction of Wesleyan Methodism into Shetland), in the course of a tour through the islands, paid a visit to Vaila, Melby, and Papa. At the latter place the late Gideon Henderson, Esq., the best Shetland sportsman of his day, provided a rare treat for the reverend doctor, in the shape of a seal-hunt in this very cave. The day was beautiful, the sea perfectly smooth, and, having arrived at the entrance, Dr Clarke left the boat and remained on a ledge of rock to watch the movements of the seals. A net, made of strong cord, with meshes nine inches square, was then stretched across the mouth of the cave, and reached to the bottom of the sea, a depth of about three fathoms one end of the net being attended to by Dr Clarke himself, the other, on the opposite side of the entrance, by the writer, then

a boy. The boat next passed into the darkness, and, after a brief absence, returned, Mr Henderson reporting that on the beach at the head of the cave, which was lighted by the opening in its roof, the marks of moisture on the stones indicated that five seals had been recently lying upon them. The boat then returned into the cave, the crew shouting and beating on the gunwale with the oars to drive the seals outward; and, to the doctor's intense delight, the five seals, varying in length from five to about seven feet, were seen approaching the net. The four largest, however, the moment they caught sight of it, returned into the cave and were seen no more; but the fifth shoved its head through a mesh, and before it could disengage itself the doctor and his juvenile assistant let go the side-fastenings of the net, and the poor selkie was speedily and inextricably snared. The sea was so clear, even to the bottom, that every movement was distinctly seen; and on the return of the boat the seal was hoisted on board unhurt, and afterwards placed in the yacht, the worthy doctor carrying him off as a valuable trophy of a day's unique sport."

During the long evening hours, when the mellow twilight softened the flaming tints of the granite rocks, I sketched "Maiden" or "Frau Stack." On its summit are the ruins of a cottage, where, it is said, the Laird of Papa confined his daughter, to be out of the reach of her suitors, whom, nevertheless, a young Udaller from Islesburgh succeeded in carrying away over-night.

Next morning I secured the services of a crew; and, before going to Melby, they rowed me through a long tunnel hollowed by the waves through a granite stack. It was bathed in an infinite variety of brilliant colours; gaily-tinted sea-weed glittered beneath the crystal waters; and as we emerged from a splendid arch, a glow of sunlight burst forth, producing an effect truly dazzling.

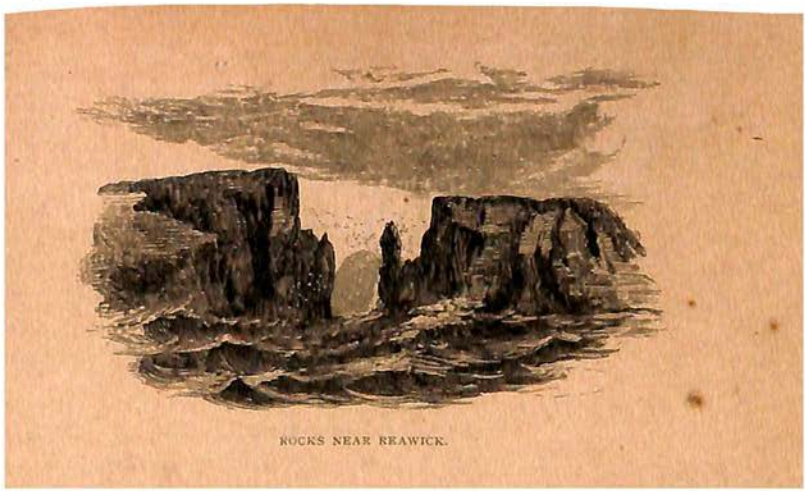
On leaving Melby, and crossing Sandness Hill, I had to travel over a very rough stretch of country, interspersed with unfriendly-looking bog-holes, and favoured with no path worthy of the name. A desolate track it certainly is, with its marshy glens and extensive patches of peat-moss intersected by wide gaping ruts—so desolate that I could scarcely feel surprised when I ever and anon discovered the scattered bones of beast and bird lying bleached by the weather, and well skeletonised by the ravens. On my journeyings to and from a spot, a view of which I was painting, I passed the skeleton of a pony crouching under a ledge, the head being laid as if sleeping close under the lee to avoid the blasts. In such position the poor creature had doubtless died. We more favoured Southerners can form no adequate conception of the peril and discomfort endured by faithful ministers in these parts during winter. A sad instance of this occurred but last year, when, not a clergyman,

but an equally-devoted church-officer, perished in one of the fearful bog-holes near to Sandness.

On my way to Reawick I called at the manse of Watsness, and passed a

MANSE OF WATSNESS.

pleasant day with the hospitable clergyman; and on reaching Reawick itself, I was most kindly entertained by Andrew Umphray, Esq., and family, who aided me in appreciating very thoroughly the beauties of that charming locality.



ROCKS NEAR REAWICK.

FOULA, FROM THE HILL ABOVE SCALLOWAY.

CHAPTER V.

FAR over the faint-gleaming deep, from the midst of gray mist clouds, rise the tall cliffs of Foula, towering aloft to a height of thirteen hundred feet, and terminating at one point in an absolutely perpendicular precipice of the same height. Storm and tempest have in vain besieged it, and countless waves have spent their fury against its adamantine walls, being ever repulsed in seething foam back to the bosom of the ocean, to be lashed by succeeding billows into clouds of spray, mid a din more fearful than the roar of contending artillery.

Desiring to visit this "isle of the sea"—the supposed Ultima Thule of the Romans—I got on board the *Swallow*, a trading sloop. A favourable breeze wafted us thither. We topped the waves with a light buoyant motion, and as dusk faded into night we anchored at a small gio to the east of the island. The teacher, a very versatile genius, who had just returned from the piltock-fishing, rowed us ashore in his boat. A very versatile genius indeed. He reads a sermon every Sabbath in the kirk; teaches the school through the week; is agent for the Poor-Law Board, session-clerk, and registrar. He makes first-rate shoes and splendid coats, having originally been a tailor by profession. He built his boat, he coopers, shoots, fishes, farms his croft, and is a most successful sheep-farmer; for a hardy breed of hungry sheep which he brought from Fair Isle have multiplied very rapidly, to the alarm of the natives, who are afraid lest they devour all the pasture on the "*scathold*," or commonty.

I was comfortably put up at the "*Ha' House*"—*alias*, Loira-field Cottage—

INTERIOR OF A FOULA COTTAGE.

From the original Water Colour in the possession of R. T. C. Scott, Esq. of Melby.

having a letter of introduction to its occupant from the proprietor of the island, R. T. C. Scott, Esq. of Melby, who from his natural amiability, genial, winning manner, and genuine kindness to his tenantry, is beloved by all.

The first night I spent on Foula proved sleepless, for my box-bed was divided by a very thin partition from that which mine host and family occupied, and the youngest member of the household, being unwell, cried piteously the livelong night. To this circumstance I owed the scamper I had over the island next morning, from 4.30 to 10 A.M., by which time I was thoroughly appetized for breakfast; and so rapidly did the eggs disappear, I was inclined to consider them, like *siller*, "only a *sicht*."

Those who regard a dinner of three courses, and wine, as an indispensable condition to the enjoyment of life, would esteem Foula no paradise. During the seven weeks I sojourned there, I had for breakfast, dinner, and tea—eggs, oat-cake, flour-scones, and tea (a dozen cups a-day), save when I shared "pot-luck" with the natives, and had an opportunity of judging of the comparative merits of sour cod-heads, dried and fresh piltocks, dog-fish, and dried skate, pregnant with ammoniacal odours.

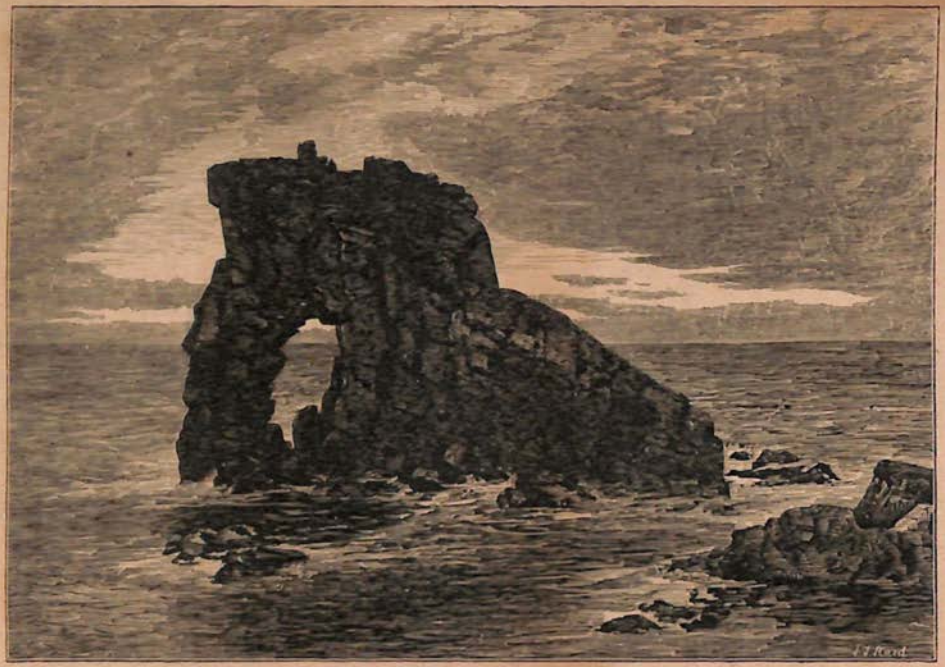
I learned from the fishermen that no later than yesterday the lighthouse steamer steamed as close up to the rocks at the south creek as if the captain had been acquainted with the coast from childhood. As this was the first steamer the islanders had seen near the island, they were greatly astonished; and a few, having heard of the doings of the pressgang in days of yore, hid themselves for fear. However, the peaceable errand of the *Pharos* once known, the intelligence soon spread, and all the natives who chose were invited on board—a treat which will be long remembered; together with the fact that the Lord Provost of Edinburgh, whom they designated the "greatest man in Scotland," had landed on the island, and "purchased a few dozen eggs and a couple of cod-fish."

To the east, the Foula hills are very steep; while to the west they terminate in precipitous cliffs. Owing to the prevalence of mists, I wandered sometimes for hours, desirous of reaching a westward-looking promontory, whence might be seen the line of cliffs, in one of which the natives pointed out a large carbuncle, supposed to emit twinkling rays in the sombre twilight. Oft thus wandering in the gray mist, I noted with curious eye

objects which at other times I would have passed unheeded,—seeing new beauties in each lichen-grown stone, in the heather-bell, or the tiny fern that owes its life to the protecting care of a gray old boulder, beneath whose ample shelter from the wind and the spray it crouches timidly. Having chanced to climb near the summit of the "*Sneug*," I was not left in ignorance of the fact; for the ever-watchful bounxie, the noblest of the gulls, in whose august presence the eagle forbears to attack the young lamb, pounced upon me; and having summoned the aid of his mate or neighbour, in turns they darted with furious swoops within an inch of the spike of a large sketching umbrella which I pointed at them. Descending the hills rather rapidly, and keeping a sharp-look out behind, to see if my assailants were reappearing, I narrowly escaped walking over the cliffs, being only made aware of danger by the noise of the waters breaking at the base of the cliffs, nine or ten hundred feet below. It was a fearful brink; and looking over, I could see nothing of the ocean, whose ceaseless roar I heard so audibly through the snow-white bank of fog which mantled the island. Dr Hibbert describes the scene looking down from this perpendicular height in a clear day:—"The wide Atlantic rolls its tide. Dense columns of birds hover through the air, consisting of mews, kittywakes, lyres, sea-parrots, or guillemots: the cormorants occupy the lowest portions of the cliffs, the kittywakes whiten the ledge of one distinct cliff, gulls are found on a third, the welkin is darkened with their flight, nor is the sea less covered with them as they search the waters in quest of food. But when the winter appears, the colony is fled, and the rude harmony produced by their various screams is succeeded by a desert stillness." Referring to the bold daring of the Foula man, he adds:—"It was formerly said of him, 'his *gutcher* (grandfather) *guid* before, his father *guid* before, and he must expect to go over the Sneug too.'"

From the tree-roots discovered in the mossy valleys of Foula and other of the Shetland islands, it is assumed that leafy woods once graced the soil of these bleak isles. Tradition affirms that those of Foula were burnt by a party of Lewis men on a plundering excursion.

When in Foula I was particularly struck with the deep and honest religious sentiment which almost universally pervaded the people, and which was specially manifested in a profound attachment to the resident Inde-



GADA STACK—FOULA.

pendent preacher, an indefatigable and earnest man, cordially devoted to his work. The Foula men were wont to be a notoriously wild set of fellows; but the spirit of their dream is now changed, and in place of indulging in merry music and the dance, they are essentially a solemn people. The women, likewise, are serious and devout. As illustrative of this state of feeling, I cannot refrain from mentioning a little story of a young couple who had just attained to a house of their own. After supper, the first night they were in their "new house," as they called it, Mary took a small pocket Bible, which had been a present from Jamie in their courting days, out of her chest, and laid it on the table before him, crossed her hands, and sat down composedly at his side. He looked first at the book, then at her, and next in the fire, and his face became slightly flushed. When he did not seem inclined to take up the book, Mary said, "But du maun do it, Jamie; du 's noo da head o' a family, an' der 's naething lek beginnin' richt. Lat 's gie wirsels ta da Lord at first, an' dan der 's nae fear o 's, come what may. An' der 's naebody here bit wirsels twa, an' du 's surely no feard for me, Jamie?" The appeal was irresistible. He took the book, read a psalm, offered a short but earnest prayer, after which Mary kissed and caressed him, saying she was proud of him, and that he was the best man in the world.

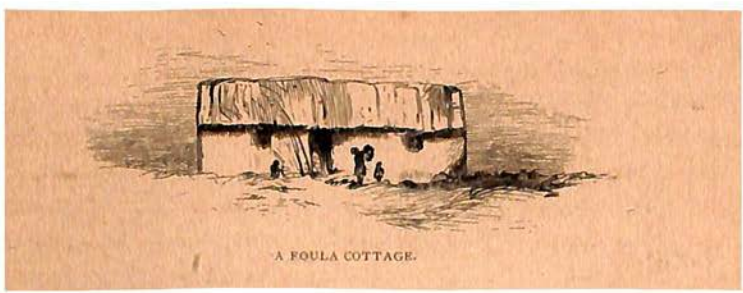
Not long ago these islanders were much under the power of superstitious notions. One noted spirit, the "Nygel," or "Nigle," was supposed to appear near streams of running water, and particularly about water-mills, where, in the night, he seized and held fast the water-wheel with his teeth until he was driven away by brands of fire thrown at him. In colour and size he varied, but behoved always to be shaped like a quadruped,—to have glaring eyes, terrible teeth, and a tail like the rim of an immense wheel turned up over his back. It is said that he once entered a dwelling and expelled the inmates, after which the place was not occupied for thirty years. The smooth stones, termed thunder-bolts—a supposed safeguard against lightning—are still possessed by one or two, and highly prized; while a few old men tell of a wondrous journey they once made over to the mainland, on which occasion they were surrounded by a legion of strange beings—a very host of monsters —who rose out of the sea and threatened to devour them. These old Foula men still grow pale and become unnerved when they tell of that hideous

array, which they describe as containing every animal, created and uncreated, with "horrible combinations of bird and beast, and fish and human."

The Foula people were the last in Shetland to relinquish the use of the old Norse language. To this day the southernmost house in the island is called "Norther House" (a corruption of Norse House). There, according to tradition, the kings of Scotland sent their sons to learn to speak Norse.

There is a legend in Foula about a small hole on the summit of the hill of Loira-field, called the "lum of Loira-field," an opening like the mouth of a pit, into which, it is said, a dog and a sheep disappeared, emerging at the sea-shore alive and hearty, after a precipitate descent of fourteen hundred feet. Another tradition has it that the hole extends for miles, and that four Dutch sailors exhausted a cask of lines in the vain endeavour to find the bottom. On taking up the stone which they had fastened to the end of the coil, poison adhered to it, of which the four men died.

In wet weather I spent many pleasant days in the Foula cottages, particularly Leraback (the subject of the engraving, "A Foula Interior"), and I ever found the inmates kind and polite. Leraback is a fair sample of the Shetland



A FOULA COTTAGE.

cottage, and contains most of the articles of furniture peculiar to the country—the tall wooden press, long resting-chair or sofa, box-beds, anker-kettle, *daffach*, arm-chairs, and spinning-wheels. The fire is in the middle of the floor, and rows of piltocks, and *hocs* or dog-fish, are hung across the roof to get the benefit of the "reek." A much-respected dissenting clergyman, still alive, called at this cottage to inquire for a poor woman who was dying of consumption. On hearing she was no better, he inquired if they had used means to aid her recovery: "Yah," said her aged mother, "we gaed to the kirkyard, and brought

NORTH COAST OF FOULA.

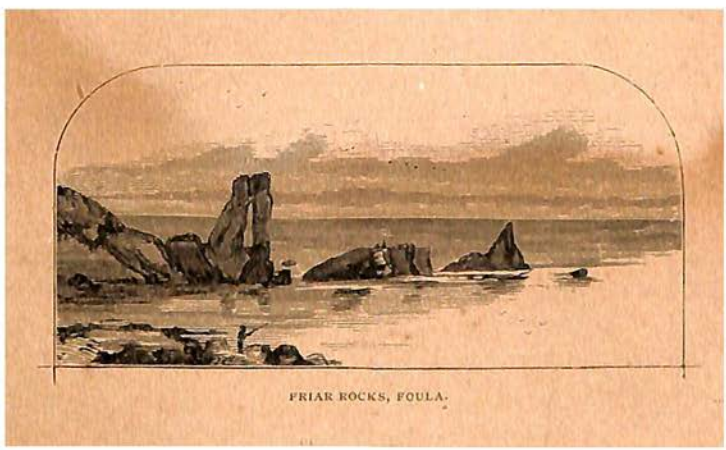
mould frae the grave o' the last body buried, an' laid it on her breast. As this had nae effect, we gaed to the brig ower which the last corpse was ta'en, an' took some water frae the burn below, an' made her drink it. This failed too, an', as a last resource, we dug a muckle hole i' the grund, an' put her in't." The same gentleman, when walking across the island, observed a group of islanders dancing about, and throwing brands of fire at something. On reaching the spot, he heard them repeating an old Norse incantation; saw a young quey in their midst, at which they were throwing the brands of burning peat, and was told that "the *trows* had taen the quey to the hills, and that they were driving the trows away wi' the burning peats to get the cow back."

On a Sabbath afternoon, as we were leaving the church, a French fishing-vessel neared the island, from which the crew, having manned a boat, were seen to make for the coast, for the sad purpose of burying a much-loved shipmate. As the churchyard was at the other end of the island, and delay would endanger the safety of their vessel, the sad-hearted mariners, unwilling, nevertheless, to consign their companion to the keeping of the restless sea, buried him hurriedly at the top of one of the lonely cliffs pictured in the engraving of the "North coast of Foula." The incident suggested to a friend, Mr D. Beattie Bain, the following lines:—

"On the fitful gale the sea-mew's wail
Is borne from the breezy cliff;
And a band of oarsmen, mute and pale,
Pull slowly their Gallic skiff:
In the poop, enwrapt in a sea-blanch'd sail,
Lies a sailor, stark and stiff.

"Oh! far they had roam'd o'er the fleecy foam,
Long sail'd the sea together!
Oh! woe for the hour that summon'd home
The life of their luckless brother!
And their hearts are drear as a cheerless sea,
As they chant their prayers on bended knee
For the soul of their sailor for ever set free,
O'er the grave where he rests so peacefully,
All heedless of waves and weather.

"On the headland they wake the sea-bird's scream,
As they move away sighing farewell;
But the storm nor the bird can wake from his dream
Him whom they had loved so well.—
On a cross of wood, by the evening gleam,
I read the name—'Beautelle.'"



FRIAR ROCKS, FOULA.

WHALSEY.

BROUGH LODGE—FETLAR.

RUINS OF AN OLD KIRK, NORTH YELL.

CHAPTER VI.

THE sailing packets were preparing for their weekly departure from Lerwick on the last Tuesday in June. The summer sun smiled on the busy scene; and about noon, having got a glimpse of the rising mainsail of the *Imogen*, about to start for Unst, I made all haste to get on board. We had passed on our way the Unicorn Reef, where Kirkcaldy of Grange was wrecked while in pursuit of the infamous Bothwell; but unfortunately the tide proved stronger than the wind, as we vainly endeavoured to get through Whalsey Sound. Nought was left us but to anchor there for six hours. When opposite Whalsey I took the opportunity of visiting Symbister, to enjoy a much and justly esteemed view from the door of the Ha' House—a splendid mansion, built of granite at a cost of £20,000. It is the residence of R. Bruce, Esq. of Symbister. I admired the view exceedingly; but it was better suited for a panorama than an ordinary sketch-book. Very early next morning I

landed at Uyea Sound, and, in company with a party of gentlemen, walked over the hills to Balta, a distance of six miles.

It was my good fortune while there to share, as so many had done before, the hospitable entertainment afforded by Thomas Edmondston, Esq., the generous laird of Buness. Here M. Biot, the great French physician and philosopher, spent a few weeks when measuring the time of the seconds pendulum. On returning to France, he wrote in enthusiastic terms of the kindness he experienced while living there, and was deeply impressed with the quiet beauty of Shetland scenery.

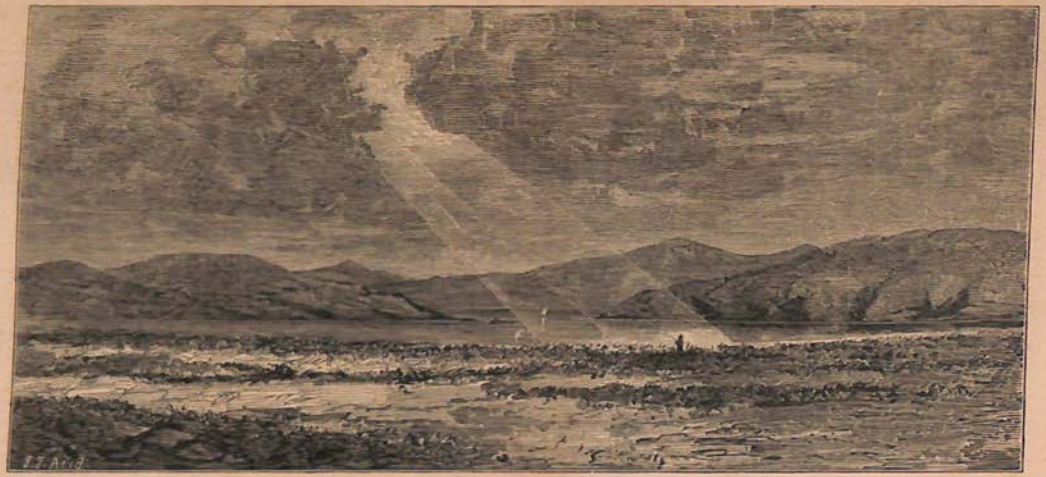
I enjoyed sketching of scenes at Burra Firth, and sailing about the Loch of Cliff, a beautiful fresh-water loch two miles long. On either side the hills are clad with rich verdure. It is not many yards distant from Burra Firth, a long stretch of water between the hills of Hermaness and Saxavord. These hills were, according to mythical legends, named after two powerful giants addicted to throwing stones at each other, which stones are the stacks near the edge of the cliffs. On the summit of Saxavord are loose stones, the supposed remains of Saxe's watch-tower, while a deep cleft in the rock is said to have been the abode of this giant warrior. To gain the extremity of Hermaness—to sketch the "Muckle Flugga Lighthouse" and "Out-Stack," the most northerly rock in the British islands—proved exhausting work, as it is no easy task in warm weather to travel up such heights and down such dales as are to be found in Shetland. It can seldom be called walking, for, generally speaking, it is literally a "hop, step, and jump." On a hill above the Bay of Haroldswick is a cairn of stones known as "Harold's Grave," where search was recently made by scientific gentlemen for human remains. Their search was not unsuccessful, but many of the stones being thrown aside, we regretted that a time-honoured mound should have been thus disturbed, dispelling the mysterious interest that encircled these curious monuments.

Having heard of several ancient stone-crosses in a churchyard at Norwick, I paid a visit to it one evening "'tween the gloamin' an' the mirk;" and, sitting in that lone churchyard, I heard

> "The moaning, murmuring waves,
> Whose melancholy echoes wail
> Beside the lonely graves."

BALTA SOUND—UNST.

HABOLDSWICK—UNST.

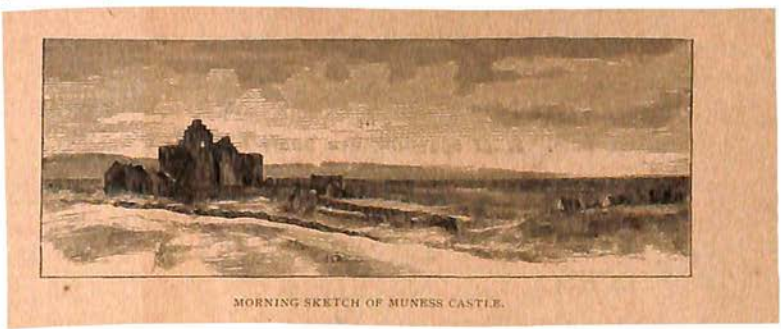


LOCH OF CLIFF.

It was a wild spot, near the rock-bound Bay of Norwick. The crosses were almost buried among the weeds. Returning to Buness about midnight, I did

OLD CROSS, NORWICK.

not go to bed, but rested on the sofa for two hours, after which I left, without a guide, for the old castle of Muness, six or eight miles away. There was no road, and I had to find my way through a stony valley, strewn with boulders of every shape and size, all of a melancholy gray hue; while it required great care and circumspection to avoid sinking deep into occasional patches of quaggy soil. Before five I was seated on my camp-stool delineating a morning view of the ruins of Muness. As soon as the fishermen were abroad I



MORNING SKETCH OF MUNESS CASTLE.

employed two of them to row me over to Fetlar. I have seldom enjoyed so pleasant a sail; it was quite a luxury to breathe on such a delightful morning. The Fetlar meadow-land is very fertile, but likewise sappy to such a degree that every step landed me in water over the shoes. Lead of varied hues, so

soft that it may be cut out of the face of the cliffs with a knife, and easily fashioned into pencils before becoming hard, is very abundant, but has never been turned to any useful account. Asbestos, too, is found in considerable quantity; and, on the shore of one of the small lochs, a deposit of magnetic sand is to be seen. I took a sketch of Brough Lodge, and accepted the invitation of Lady Nicolson, the proprietress, to lunch with her. On regaining the mainland, I sat till dark painting a large view of Muness Castle, and afterwards groped my way as best I could back to Buness, where I arrived a little after midnight.

Taking advantage of a favourable day, I visited the lighthouse on the "Muckle Flugga," a desolate rock to the extreme north of Unst. It can only be reached at one point, and that in very calm weather, by steps cut out of the solid rock. The life of those lonely light-keepers must be monotonous enough. The storm of 24th January 1868 was felt there with tremendous force; and when I visited it last July, labourers were still employed repairing the damage done during that dread night, when they were in instant expectation that the lighthouse would be swept away. The waves of the North Sea were breaking over it, although the rock on which it is built is two hundred feet in height, and the light-room stands sixty feet higher. Their tiny quarters were snug, though small; their walls were papered, and the floor carpeted with pictures from the *Illustrated London News*. Three of them at a time dwell in this ocean-home, while a fourth is on shore, where comfortable houses have been erected for the wives and families of the light-keepers; and on entering which, I found them models of tidiness, contrasting forcibly with the native huts. After spending five hours painting a water-colour of the north coast of Unst, from the lighthouse-tower, the light-keepers warned us that, if we did not wish to be detained for a week or two, we had better make for the shore with all speed, as they observed the surf breaking on the rocks. We got into the boat; and, at my request, I was landed on a slippery skerry opposite a splendid cave at the foot of Saxavord Hill. I think the name of the cave was Buness Ha'. There myriads of sea-birds were nestling on the shelvings of the rock, every spot where they could find a footing being dotted over with them, as they rubbed shoulders with each other, generally in the most amicable terms. All along this coast the faery-like rocks, strangely

MUCKLE FLUGA LIGHTHOUSE—NORTH UNST.

BLUE MOOL SOUND—BETWEEN YELL AND UNST.

EVENING SKETCH OF MUNESS CASTLE—UNST.

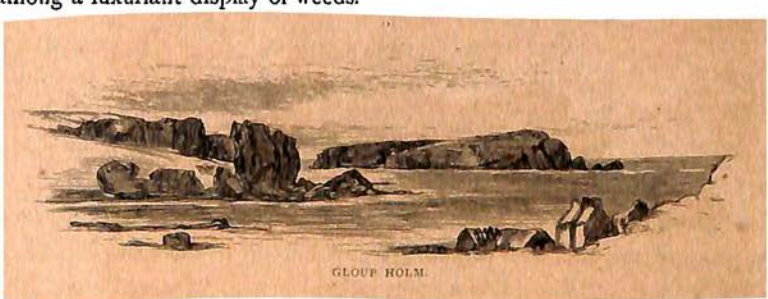
tinted by the action of the weather, are enlivened by these active denizens of air, whose screams ever mingle with the murmur of the waves.

From the top of Saxavord Hill may be had a bird's-eye view of the Shetland Islands. Towards sunset, one evening, I reached the summit, and beheld a scene of singular beauty. The sun played the alchemist, and robed in colours of resplendent hue these barren isles; the heath-clad hills and mossy vales being bathed in tones of purple and gold, while the blue ether above was reflected in the little fresh-water lakes that bespangled these isles like stars as they placidly reposed in the bosom of the limpid sea.

On leaving Unst I employed a boat's crew at Snarra Voe, consisting of two frail fishermen and a half-witted youth. They lived in a miserable hovel, where an old woman, only half clad, sat by the smouldering embers of a peat fire, baking a little bread. Slowly, very slowly, she turned the dough over and over in the brown basin on her knee; for Shetland women sit when they bake. She was, what in Shetland is so aptly termed, a *puir crater*.

In crossing Blue Mool Sound the tides are so strong, that, with an insufficient crew, there is a risk of being carried out to sea. Looking over the boat's side you can scarcely persuade yourself that the Sound is not boiling, so exactly does the simmering motion resemble the surface of boiling water.

Having called on the much-respected minister of North Yell, I walked two miles to get a drawing of what is reputed to be the oldest church in Shetland. I found it tenanted by a solitary pair of ravens, whose offspring were hopping about the top of the gable, while, within its walls, a few shrubs flourished among a luxuriant display of weeds.

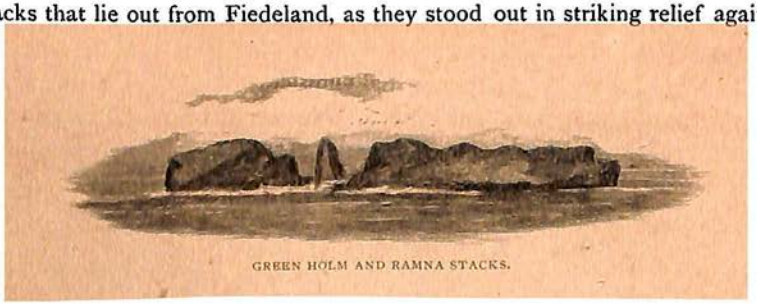


GLOUP HOLM.

After a hurried visit to Gloup, I reached the road that leads from North to Mid Yell. Gazing back on the island where I had spent so many happy

days, I was struck with the contrast between the bold, rocky headland of Blue Mool, together with the hills receding northward, that constitute the south extremity of Unst—and the soft, green, mossy peat-hills of Yell; for peat is there so universal that many have called the island "an immense peat-bog." It is not, however, so hideous to behold as such people imagine. Its hills stretch out in almost endless succession, clothed with purply heath, and deep-green grass. Ribs of dark brown show the bog-ruts; on the knowes are to be seen spots where the lightning has scalped the soil of every vestige of vegetation; while numerous boulders lie scattered about coated with silvery gray, and the trickling mountain-burns glisten in the sun. Some of the voes in Yell are scarce anywhere surpassed as scenes of quiet beauty.

Close on the edge of Mid Yell Voe are the ruins of another old church. I found the kirkyard in a sad state; for human bones and coffins, unearthed and worn by sea and weather, lay in grim heaps exposed to the vulgar gaze, the wall having been swept away by winter storms. Crossing the hills right through the centre of Yell, I came in sight of West Sandwick just as the sun had sunk; and I could not resist the temptation to sit down and sketch the stacks that lie out from Fiedeland, as they stood out in striking relief against



GREEN HOLM AND RAMNA STACKS.

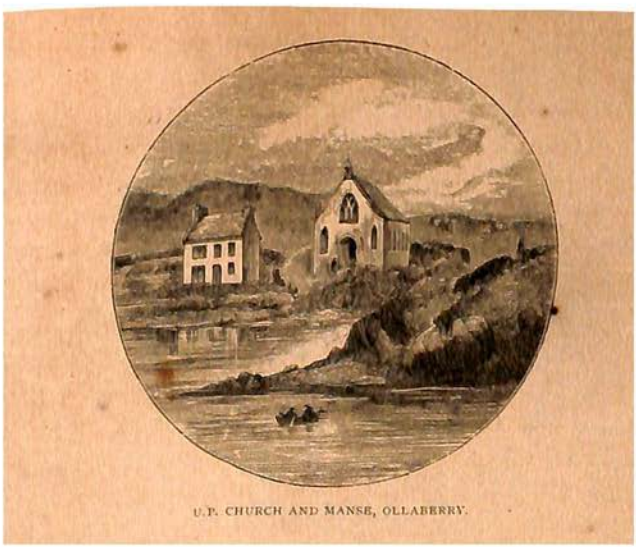
a brilliant streak of rosy light that stretched betwixt a dark purple cloud above and the deeply-toned horizon beneath. Next morning, while seated under the doorway of an old byre, for shelter from the blasts of wind and rain, busy with a sketch of the House of Sandwick, an old woman with sore eyes approached me, and, after deploring that one in my position should sit in so humble a seat, addressed this touching appeal to me: "Sir, will 'e no lift yer haund ta an auld woman mair ner eighty 'ears o' age? I hae nather faither ner mither ta day onything for me. Will ye, Sir? An' may be ye 'll get a

OLD CHURCH—MID YELL.

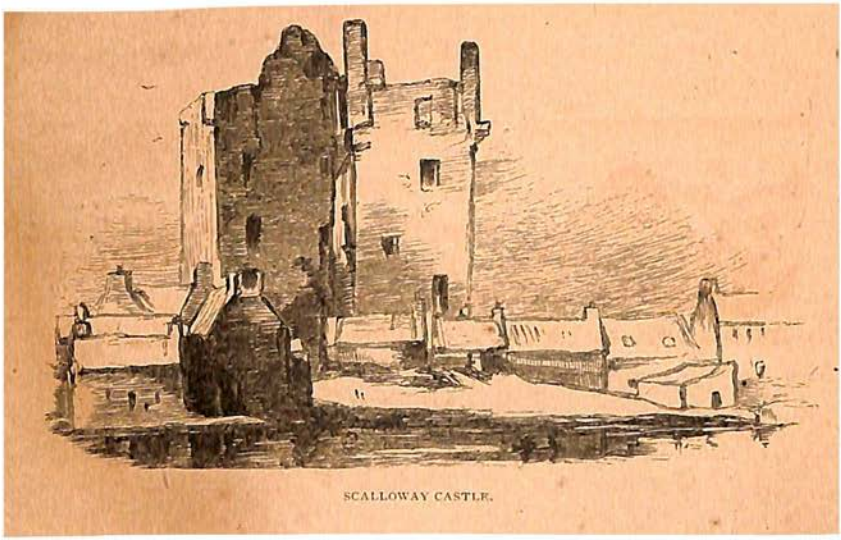
fair wind ower to the mainland." I was, of course, rewarded with the usual "blessin', blessin', Oh! blessin's on ye," accompanied by a flood of those tears which, I would almost venture to say, "come at will, and go at pleasure."

At West Yell I succeeded with some difficulty in collecting a crew of three, consisting of two lame men, who were sailmakers, and an old man too frail to go to the far haaf-fishing. Down to the *boat-noust* the trio hirpled. They rowed well, and made excellent speed; but when half-way over Yell Sound we got into a string of tide, which on either side rose alarmingly high, and tossed us about like a very air-bell, pitching me repeatedly right off my seat. Landing at Ollaberry, I had tea with Mr Anderson, and took a few sketches of the surrounding district, which is rather attractive and beautiful.

The United Presbyterians have a pretty little church and manse there. And I may mention, that I am indebted for the "rambles" which are described in these pages, to the glowing admiration of Shetland scenery exhibited by an esteemed clergyman who formerly laboured in this place.



U.P. CHURCH AND MANSE, OLLABERRY.



SCALLOWAY CASTLE.

CHAPTER VII.

I FREQUENTLY visited Scalloway, the ancient capital of Zetland. On the road thither, just opposite Lerwick, and resting on a stony hillside, is the village of Sound, where quaint groups of rustic cottages are built compactly together, the better to withstand the winter storms. The good people at Sound are, as the Jews in the Gentile world, "a people who live apart;" and it is a very rare occurrence if they marry any one out of their own community. Many of the women are handsome in face and figure, and are characterised by a decidedly Scandinavian type of features. Above the village a rocky burn pursues its seaward course over the hill; four or five little water-mills stud its path; and within sight of each other are a few *plantie-cruives*—spots of ground protected from the wind and sea-spray by high walls, where the people rear their young cabbages. Ere long we reached a peat valley, a drear prospect in dull weather. Far as the eye can reach, there stretch rows, heaps, and stacks of peats, and dismal trenches filled with stagnant water, into which many a luckless traveller has stepped unwittingly. The figures of the peat delvers and sorters are almost as dusky as the dark soil itself, save when they wear gay-coloured head-dresses, or when a little blue

COTTAGES NEAR SCALLOWAY.

SCALLOWAY.

OLD MILL—SCALLOWAY.

smoke enlivens the monotonous scene, as groups of old and young gather round a peat-fire to partake of their favourite beverage—"the cup which cheers but not inebriates"—which they infuse in Lilliputian teapots, and serve in still more diminutive cups. Sagacious geese lead through this wilderness interesting families of goslings; and the sheep, like Jacob's flock, are grotesquely spotted and marked, black, *moorat*, and white. The lambs are curious little creatures. I observed, with some amusement, a spotted ewe superintending the gambols of two frisking lambkins—one black with a white head and tail, the other white with black spectacles and a black nose.

From the hill above Scalloway an extensive and beautiful view can be had of the village, castle, and the islands to the westward; but owing to my bad fortune in being ever overtaken by the mists so prevalent in Shetland, I never saw it to advantage. The castle was built in the year 1600, by Earl Patrick Stewart, whose infamous career received an abrupt and ignominious check on the Borough Muir of Edinburgh. This castle is a lasting monument of the cruel oppression under which the peasantry of these islands for long groaned. On leaving the castle, there followed me the most miserable man I ever had the misfortune to witness; he had a wild, maniac look, jaundiced colour, was half-naked, and appeared half-starved. The humbler cottages were adorned with rows of cod-heads, hung outside on strings till sour. They are then boiled, and eaten with butter, and form a staple article of diet during the season of the cod and ling fishing.

TIRL OF A ZETLAND MILL.

I spent a day sketching the old mill; and many a pilgrim from the peat

hill halted at the bridge, resting for a few minutes their burdens to gaze inquisitively at what I was about. One old woman, at the sight of the old mill on paper, waxed eloquent as she recalled the memories of other years. "Deed ay, sur, the auld mill! thae wis better days," &c. &c.; concluding her regretful reflections by stating that she was one of those who had brought up a family, but the Lord had "ta'en them a' away;" and she only prayed now that God would not take His Holy Spirit from her, that she might be able to keep hold of Christ. Tears filled her eyes, and bending beneath the load of her sorrows and the weary burden of peats, she walked slowly away.

It was my good fortune before leaving Shetland to make the acquaintance of the young laird of Sumburgh. I spent several weeks under his hospitable roof, and had opportunity of becoming familiar with that portion of the country rendered classic by Sir Walter Scott. Sumburgh, I need scarce remind my readers, is the southern extremity of the Shetland mainland, and gives its name to the tempestuous *roost* or meeting of the waters of the Eastern and Western Oceans. When the wind is stronger than the tide, vessels are carried for days together between Sumburgh and Fitful, while in stormy weather none escape a mighty buffeting from those contending currents; and happy they who rise superior to the qualms of that malady whose joy-killing presence robs scenes of grandeur of their attractions, and renders the strong man helpless as a child; but when the storm is succeeded by a tempest,

> "She does no work by halves, yon raving ocean,
> Ingulphing those she strangles; her wild womb
> Affords the mariner whom she hath dealt on
> Their death at once and sepulchre."

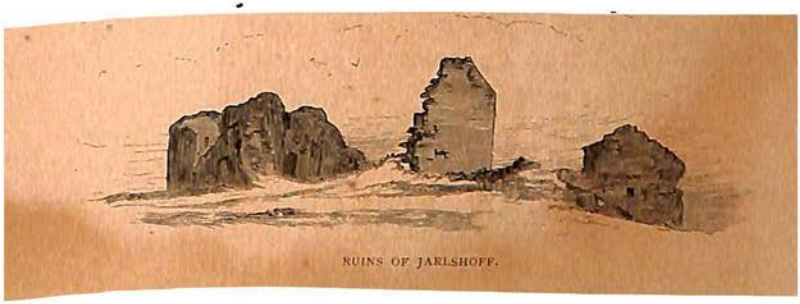
In the "Pirate," Sir Walter pictures the scene below the bold promontory of Sumburgh Head as that of the wreck of Cleveland's disabled ship. "Onwards she came, the large black hulk seeming larger at every fathom length. She came nearer, until she bestrode the summit of one tremendous billow, which rolled on with her unbroken, till the wave and its burden were precipitated against the rock, and then the triumph of the elements over the work of human hands was at once completed. One wave, we said, made the wrecked vessel manifest in her whole hulk, as it raised her, and bore

SUMBURGH HEAD.

FITFUL HEAD—DUNROSSNESS.

her onward against the face of the precipice. But when the wave receded from the foot of the rock, the ship had ceased to exist; and the retiring billow only bore back a quantity of beams, planks, casks, and similar objects, which were swept out to the offing, to be brought in again by the next wave, and again precipitated upon the face of the rock."

The ruined walls of Jarlshoff still weather the blast; and, not many yards distant, has risen, within the last two years, a stately pile of masonry, the fine



RUINS OF JARLSHOFF.

new house of Sumburgh, which will, I doubt not, prove a most charming residence, thus romantically situated between Fitful, or the White Mountain, and Sumburgh, with a look-out over the ever-changeful *roost*, and a distant view of Fair Isle. The Cape of Sumburgh is almost insulated; and an extensive area of soil is devastated by blowing sand, of a silvery white colour, which tends much to beautify the neighbouring creeks and bays, more particularly the Bay of Quendale, a scene of rare beauty. The natives still lead strangers to a hole formed by an overarching rock, near the summit of Fitful Head, the reputed cave of Norna, the Reim-kennar. It is, however, so completely filled with rubbish that even sheep must needs bend low if they would shelter there.

It is a noteworthy fact that in all Dunrossness, an extensive parish, there is not a single house licensed to sell spirituous liquors. The peasantry of this district are superior to those of many parts of Shetland. Their crofts are better cultivated, and they are more diligent in the prosecution of the fishing. They use little carts, respectable ploughs, and decent spades. In a successful year they make a good livelihood by the fishing, and many have saved sums

varying from £20 to £100. However, their calling exposes them continually to danger; and that my readers may learn a little of the fate which not unfrequently awaits the Shetland fishermen, I will describe a trip to the haaf:—

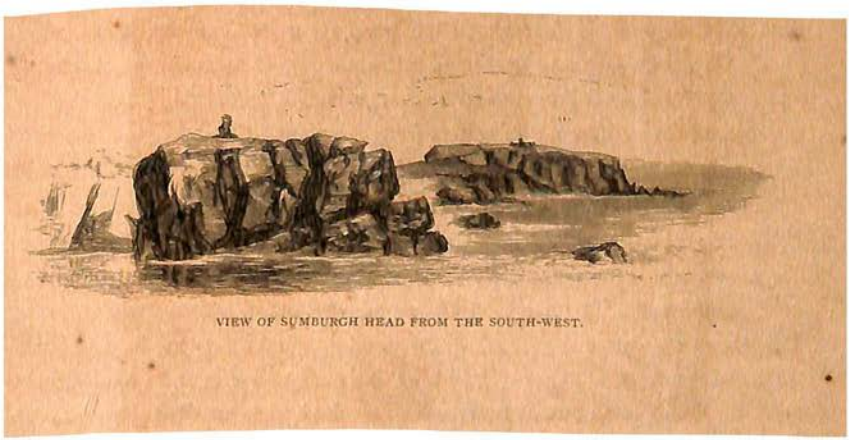
About Johnsmas, after two stormy months, the weather improved, and for a week or two the winds were hushed. The boats now went to the bank, and came ashore with fine hauls, some as high as fifteen scores of ling, about thirty cwt. On the 3d of July the sky was heavy and lowering, and the fishermen in general were reluctant to put off; but as it was thought that if the wind should rise it would only be a summer breeze at the worst, and as such excellent hauls had been made on the previous days, after a lengthy consultation two boats resolved to risk it. They hoisted sail, and never eased tack or sheet till they were at the bank, about forty miles from land. When the weather is moderate they will remain out two nights, and have three hauls; but on this particular night the wind had increased so much, that, after laying their lines, it was with difficulty they managed to get them in. The rain was falling in torrents. To reach the land at that time was out of the question. The night was so dark, owing to the black dense masses of clouds which covered the sky, the wind so strong, and the sea so rough, that the two boats resolved to keep together, and wait till they saw what daylight would bring. The gale increased so suddenly, and became so strong, that it required all that the six men could do to keep the boat's head to the wind. Morning came, but the gale had increased, and not a stone of land nor a drop of black water was to be seen. The sea was in one sheet of foam. The wind blew off the land till 10 o'clock, P.M. It then lulled for a few minutes, changed, and blew more furiously than ever. The cross sea that rose was terrific. They now resolved to try for the shore, but where they were they knew not. The skipper went into the stern; the next skilful man was put to attend the sail, a most difficult task, and required great strength as well as skill, as he was forced to lower the sail on the top of every wave, and hoist it when in the hollow of the sea. A place was cleared, in the aft room of the boat, for bailing out the water, and two men with scoops were put to attend to that alone; but notwithstanding all they could do, they shipped seas which nearly filled their boat. Their companions, who gave sail at the same time, owing to the thickness of the weather, the tremendous

VIEW OF SUMBURGH.

MOUSA CASTLE.

height of the sea, and the blinding spray, they soon lost sight of. They had not proceeded many miles when their sail was torn to shreds, and they were compelled to take again to the oars. To paint the horrors of their situation is impossible. They had not tasted anything since last evening, and were still out of sight of land, in an open boat about twenty feet of keel. The sea was running so fearfully high that one of the crew, who had made several voyages to Davis' Straits, declared he never witnessed the like in rounding Cape Farewell; and the storm was raging as fiercely as if it had been December. The gale continued all day; and all that fearful day they pulled for their very lives without tasting meat or drink. About sunset they sighted land; and next morning, utterly exhausted, and scarcely able to bear their oars, they reached the shore; but, just as the boats touched the beach, Jamie, the skipper, fell backwards—dead. Their ranksman or companion-boat was never heard of more; and seven widows and thirty fatherless children were that day thrown on the mercy of their fellow-men.

When at Sumburgh I rode occasionally to Sandlodge, and was ever most kindly entertained by John Bruce, Esq., and family. From thence I was rowed over to the island of Mousa, to get a sketch of the old castle, the most complete ruin of the period in Great Britain.



VIEW OF SUMBURGH HEAD FROM THE SOUTH-WEST.

FAIR ISLE FROM SUMBURGH.

CHAPTER VIII.

AFTER a succession of gales, which detained me two weeks at Sumburgh, waiting a favourable opportunity to make a passage to Fair Isle, succeeded a day of perfect calm. About six in the afternoon, a pleasant breeze sprung up, and we sailed from the little harbour of Grutness, hoping to reach Fair Isle by daylight next morning.

The sunshine glittered on the quivering water, and "Fitful," unlike the gloomy abode of Norna, was so completely bathed in warm sunlight as to transform and neutralise its everyday mantle of sombre gray. Soon, however, a bank of cloud rose above the horizon; a few feathery, fleecy mist-clouds floated quickly over us, tinged with tints of gold from the fast-declining sun, and were followed by denser masses, which closed rapidly around us, and hid the wide expanse of waters from our view. Sun and mist struggled for the mastery, nor struggled long; for thick and thicker grew the mist which veiled the sun and wrapped closely about Sumburgh, displaying at times the huge proportions of this giant cliff to marvellous advantage, till, wreathed in mist, we became completely isolated from our immediate surroundings, and seemed as in mid-ocean. In a few minutes more, gusts of wind, gaining in force as they became more frequent, crested the billows as they rose with fringe of foam. Our skipper, expecting the wind to increase to a gale, knew that it would be impossible to make Fair Isle with so dense a mist, and foresaw that his only safety lay in finding his way back to Sumburgh.

CROW STACK—FAIR ISLE.

Three nights after, the weather enabled us to make a second start. It was pleasant to behold the moonbeams touching every wave with silver, while Sumburgh light, like a guardian star, shone brightly in the distance. About two there were signs of approaching daylight, tinging the eastern sky with flickering rays of light, which, gaining power, bathed the heavens in tints having all the warm and luxuriant tones of the ripe peach. As the sun rose, fresh interest was added to the scene by the tremendous swell of the sea rising against and far above the horizon like huge mountains of ice, now coming out in dark masses against a flood of light, as the king of morn rose with resplendent ray, and reflected his glowing form in the bosom of the ocean.

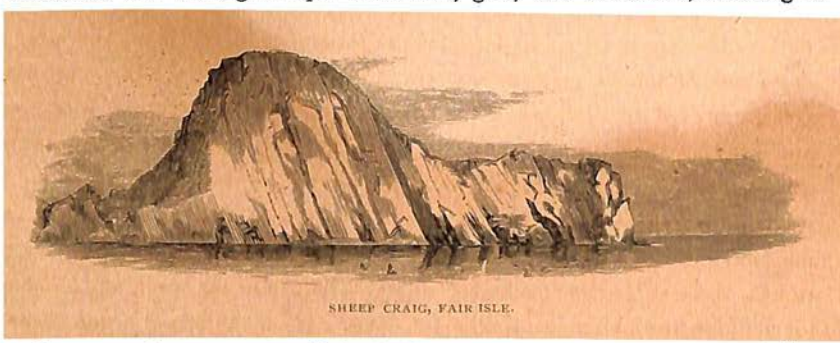
When alongside of the cliff to the north of the island, such was the strength of the tide that we beat about for more than three hours without gaining an inch. At last we came to an anchorage close under the lee of a high cliff. We were landed by the "dingy" among slippery boulders, and carried on the back of one of the islanders to the shore. Groups of Fair Isle girls, who had been noticing all morning from the peat hill our vain efforts to make the creek, came running in a state of great excitement to meet us; they were all linked together, and hand in hand some twenty of them tripped lightly down the winding path that led to the foot of the precipitous heights where we landed. The minister's housekeeper, who had made the passage with us, was being caressed, kissed, and welcomed with the customary salutation, "Oh, welcome back again! Blyth to see de, pare crater! 'Honest lamb!" &c. &c.; while I, not having the clerical white cravat, was set down as a much-dreaded and daily-expected official, known all over Shetland, and even in this remote isle, as the "Dog-tax man." I took care to undeceive them, having no desire that the memory of my visit should serve as a tombstone to mark the time when many aged, infirm, and ill-favoured members of the canine race departed this life in a precipitate manner by being thrown over the cliffs nearest their respective homes; for such, I believe, is the doom awaiting them when that gentleman shall arrive.

From its height Fair Isle is seen by mariners at a great distance, and serves as a mark by which they may direct their course; but in fog, and during the long, dark nights of winter, when the stormy seas run high, it proves

a most inhospitable coast; for no warning bell or beacon-light tells of danger while the bark rides before the gale, and rushes to meet its doom against the unpitying rock. On the summit of the "Ward Hill" may still be seen the ruins of the guard-house, where, centuries ago, the lonely watchman spent many a weary night, ready to kindle his signal fire at the approach of a hostile sail, as when King Harold's war-ships were seen nearing Hialtland's shores—

"Upon each mountain's rugged height
Gleam'd luridly the watch-fire's light—
Isle signall'd unto isle."

The island is girt about with a rugged perpendicular wall of sandstone, diversified with bold, grotesque headlands, gios, and out-stacks, standing in



SHEEP CRAIG, FAIR ISLE.

solitary grandeur, around which circling wreaths of foam are ever winding, and over which the huge rollers from the Atlantic leap sportively that they may course with unbroken power through dismal caves, where, after passing through tortuous tunnels black as night, they again greet the light of day, boiling at the foot of mighty shafts which pierce the cliff three hundred feet overhead.

The Fair Isle crops at best have always proved meagre, and insufficient to provide meal even for the islanders themselves; so it can be no matter of wonder that the Duke of Medina and his Spanish sailors, who were wrecked there in 1588, had to endure the severest privations until intelligence of their disaster could be despatched to Shetland. The islanders, seeing not only their cattle, sheep, fish, and fowls devoured by the hungry strangers, but likewise their ponies, availed themselves of the darkness of night to carry

their beasts, and what still remained of their provisions, to caves known to themselves alone, and where the Spaniards might not discover them.

A few years ago, owing to over-population and a combination of unfortunate circumstances, the poverty of Fair Isle reached a crisis, and Government sent a vessel in which three hundred of them emigrated to Canada. It was a sad parting when more than one half of the entire population tore themselves asunder from their sorrowing friends, and left behind them the bleak, lonely rock of their nativity, which, despite all the hardships they had there endured, was bound to their hearts by the most endearing ties.

The cottages, which are somewhat antiquated, have the byre and the dwelling under one roof, and a door common to both. Being but rarely supplied with anything in the shape of a window, they are necessarily very dark. The fire is always to be found in the centre of the floor, and near it is the seat of honour, an arm-chair with a tall back of plaited straw, on which you are invited to sit down. The pig then probably fraternises with you, and rubs his scaly bulk against you familiarly, with a good-natured grunt of satisfaction. In one corner of the room are one or two calves; and in a used-up keyshie, hung on the wall, nestles a sagacious old hen, with a flourishing brood of chickens. The furniture consists of the usual complement of trunks, viz., one for each member of the family, one for meal, and another for the milk and butter; as well as box-beds, a small table, and a miscellaneous array of stools and chairs.

Each family, if rich enough, has a couple of ponies, kept exclusively for leading in the peats. Owing to the scarcity of fodder for them in winter, they become sadly reduced; and, wandering about in a pitiable condition, are impelled by the cravings of hunger to climb to dangerous parts of the cliff, whence, from their extreme weakness, they are often blown over into the sea. Every year sheep and ponies are lost in this way; and if a native bears a grudge against his neighbour, a not unfrequent mode of taking revenge is to push that neighbour's beasts over the precipices at night.

On the whole, the islanders are intelligent and industrious. Their skill in the management of their little native skiffs is well known; while the women are noted for the manufacture of gaily-coloured hosiery, the patterns of which are the same as those still to be found in Spain.

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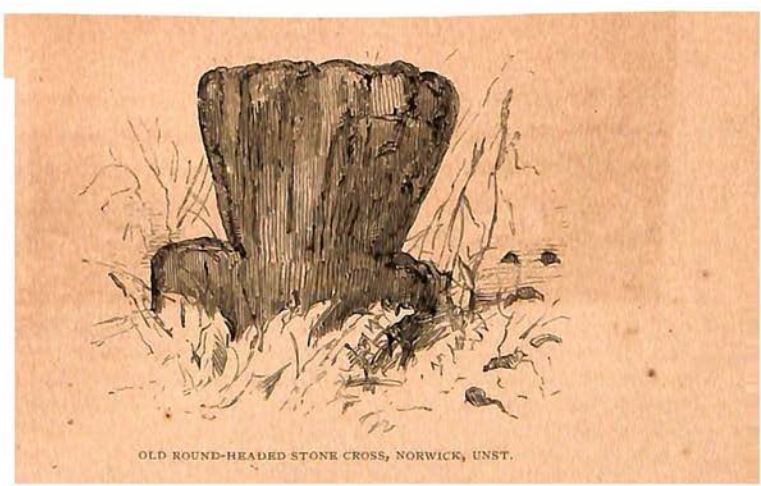
During winter the islanders are entirely ignorant of what is going on in the world without the circuit of their rocky home; but the enterprising and kind-hearted proprietor of the island maintains a shop there well stored with the necessaries of life, and even a few of the luxuries, such as tea and sugar. They have a genuine love of knowledge, and prize every scrap of printed matter; and in summer, if the elements are favouring, they go out to meet the Shetland mail-steamer, and solicit newspapers from the passengers. A deputation who visited Fair Isle recently were persuaded, on occasion of their distributing a few books, "either that there must be a great many towns in the island, or that several had asked for books twice;" and I know of one man who requested a large-print Testament for his "old father," which said old father had gone to his long rest many years before.

While I was sojourning on the island the Church Missionary was absent in the south, so the Methodists had forenoon service, which I attended. The little chapel was filled, with the exception of a few broken-down seats at the door. The leader, an old fisherman, gave us an able, earnest, and impressive sermon, which was listened to with reverent attention, after which a hymn was sung with a vigour truly startling. The leader then requested brother George to pray—half paused—then added, "and, George, pray short." The young married couples are very affectionate, and it is nothing extraordinary for the wife to put her arm round her husband's neck, draw his head under the book-board, and kiss him; while the fashionable mode of sitting in church is for each to have his arm around his partner's waist.

A few weeks before I visited Fair Isle, the *Lessing*, a new ship on her first passage, was wrecked at Skeldie Cliff. She had only left Bremen a week before she struck, and was bound for New York, with a very miscellaneous cargo, and a hopeful band of emigrants from many different European nationalities, one hundred and fifty of whom were women and children. Thick weather prevented the officers from taking an observation; and supposing that they were fifty miles past Fair Isle, every sail was set to catch the breeze, and their bark rode bravely right before the wind, at the rate of seven knots an hour, when, at day-dawn, she struck with a terrible crash. In front was a dark, troubled pool, death-like in its solemn depths, walled round by perpendicular rocks, whose tops were lost to view in the dense

SHELDIE CAVE—FAIR ISLE.

mist; behind, an angry ocean threatened to tear the bark asunder, as one by one the boats were lowered and smashed to atoms among the breakers. We need not wonder that one loud, spontaneous yell of agony broke forth as the emigrants gazed around—a woeful cry, re-echoed by the screams of the sea-fowl, that tenanted the rocks, and rousing the lonely islanders, who, while they could see nothing of the ship because of the density of the mist, yet, above the thunder of the breakers and the cry of the sea-birds, heard again and again the wild shriek of human woe. Finding out their position thus, they promptly hastened to their assistance through a remarkable tunnel, called "Skeldie Cave." All were taken through that narrow tunnel—a work of great difficulty and danger. They were landed at the foot of cliffs three hundred feet high, at the top of which stood all the women of the island in earnest consultation; as there was scarcely any meal in the island at the time, gloomy pictures of famine filled their troubled minds. But soon sympathy for the shipwrecked ones overcame every other consideration; and one by one they descended the steep path to help up their unfortunate sisters, carrying their children for them, and welcoming them to the shelter of their humble cottages, and a share of such fare as they possessed. Every cottage in the island was crowded, and the two little churches and a school-house were turned into temporary dormitories.



OLD ROUND-HEADED STONE CROSS, NORWICK, UNST.

SKETCH OF TREES ON DR EDMONDSTON'S GROUNDS, BALTA SOUND, UNST.

CHAPTER IX.

AS the foregoing chapters are of so sketchy a character, I now append a few notes, such as, during my rambles, I was able to glean from various sources, descriptive of the manners and customs of the Shetland peasantry; and I avail myself of this opportunity to acknowledge my indebtedness for much interesting information to Mr Robert Jamieson, teacher at Sandness.

The life of the Shetlander is, as a rule, somewhat suggestive of Robinson Crusoe; for he is in turn fisherman, farmer, mason, wright, weaver, tailor, tanner, shoemaker, boat-builder, &c.; while his wife looks after the sowing and reaping, delving and weeding, the milking of the cow, churning, and the grinding of the corn or "bere." She plucks the wool off the sheep, a process called *rooing*,—spins the yarn, and knits stockings which vary in price from fivepence to a guinea a pair, as well as a variety of other articles of Shetland hosiery. Moreover, she can row

most skilfully, and has been known to display the courage of a Grace Darling by pulling out in the most tempestuous weather to the rescue of drowning fishermen. But soon this state of matters will belong to the things of the past. Owing to the more frequent and regular communication with the south, the characteristic features of Shetland life are gradually giving place to more modern usages. New lairds are making new laws, and, by reserving the whole or part of the scatthold to be let as sheep runs, are rendering it necessary that the crofters become either fishermen or farmers; for it has long been considered the ruin of Shetland that the energies of the people are divided between the two.

Seafaring may be esteemed the legitimate calling of the Shetlander. He depends principally for his maintenance on the untold wealth of ocean, and, duck-like, from his earliest youth, is accustomed to the water; for, nightly, the boys, as soon as they are capable of baiting a hook, accompany their seniors on their regular fishing excursions for sillocks, piltocks, or saith; and, when a little older, two boys will take the place of a man, and try their fortunes at the far-haaf or deep-sea fishing. There are few Shetlanders who have not served as seamen for a longer or shorter period, while very many, owing to the Shetlandic aptitude for seamanship, attain important positions as shipmasters.

As nearly as I can ascertain, about one-sixth of the householders in Shetland are pretty well-to-do, about one-half are from hand to mouth, and the remainder are in debt. Owing to the poverty of the soil and the limited resources of the islands, a considerable proportion of the population emigrate. Their favourite fields are Australia and New Zealand. They generally succeed well; become wealthy merchants, large sheep-farmers, shipowners, captains, and successful gold-diggers; and, mindful of the old folks at home, send them handsome remittances. Shetland girls who emigrate, I am told, are soon married; and, proving excellent wives, their husbands join them in assisting their relatives on the "Old Rock." Many a poor Shetland family is mainly supported by the considerate liberality of daughters and sisters in the Australian colonies.

The dialect of the Shetlander, though simple, is, on the whole, pleasant, and closely resembles the manner of speech which foreigners attain before they are thoroughly acquainted with English; for there is a little of the Norse, somewhat of the Dutch, and a sprinkling of Scotch, in Shetland English. The "th" sound they seldom preserve, but reproduce by the sound of "d"; and many contractions are employed, as a sentence or two will suffice to show: "Lay dee doon upo' de grund, an' den I 'se come an' tak dee, Johnnie." "I 'm blyd du 's putten me in mind o 't." The dialogue in the following story may be taken as a sample of the dialect. During the long winter evenings of Shetland it is customary for the boys of the more populous districts to annoy the inmates of the various houses by blowing in smoke through the keyholes and crevices of the door. For this purpose they use a *smookie*, made out of a "kail-runt." The owner of a kail-yard, subjected to nocturnal visits from boys in the neighbourhood for the purpose of plundering kail-runts, determined to put a period to the nefarious practice. The moon shone brilliantly as he stood in the shadow of his house prepared to pounce upon the

first intruder. The boys came over the wall unsuspectingly, and commenced tearing up the cabbages, when the irritated watcher sallied forth, but being a man advanced in life, and consequently not so nimble as the impudent aggressors, he failed in capturing any except a little boy, who, overcome with terror, cried out, "Oh! it wasna me, it wasna me!" Old man, in a sympathetic strain: "We-e-l, me jewel, I'm no sayin' it wis dee, but if it wisna, it was some een very lek dee, so dere's dee a dad," giving him a hearty slap on the side of head. Boy, in sad trepidation: "Na, na, it wisna me! I'm no a teef!" Old man: "We-e-l, we-e-l, me jewel, I'm no sayin' it wis dee, an' I widna lek to ca' dee a teef; but doos unco teef-lookin', so dere's dee anidder," repeating the castigation. The boy again attempted to vindicate himself, but was met with a like soothing rejoinder, "Weel, weel, me dear, I sanna say 'at doo did it; but sin' I'm gottin dee here, doo'll no be de warr o' a dad, so dere's dee anidder." And so on, till, exhausted with his unusual exertion, the old gentleman let his young victim join his more fortunate companions.

Thirty years ago, the dress of the Shetlander was rather more picturesque than now. White canvas or duck trousers, ornamentally stitched with black thread; a blue Shetland *claith* jacket, with white buttons; a vest of blue cloth, a red cotton handkerchief round his neck, and a blue Scotch bonnet,—formed the lively attire of the Shetlander. His shoes were strong, always of native build, being made of home-tanned leather. On Sundays, however, he wore the smart sailor dress of the period; and the more dashing of the young men loved even to exhibit a vest of some gay, showy material. The married men wore hats plaited of Shetland straw, covered with white cotton, and painted black. A few of those are still to be seen, but in general they have been superseded by the cap and wide-awake.

The Sunday dress of the young lasses consisted of petticoat of home-spun *claith*, dyed blue; a loose jacket of pure white cambric, called a "slug;" and a white muslin "mutch." In summer their feet were bare; but in winter they wore stout, black woollen stockings and *rivlins*, slippers or sandals made of untanned cow's-hide. From observing those who are still thus attired, I would judge it to be a very becoming dress, setting off their native charms to great advantage. For Sunday appearance they decked themselves in a light cotton gown, a tartan shawl, and a lace cap gaily trimmed with red ribbons.

When boating, the fishermen commonly appeared in knitted nightcaps, with brilliant strips of colours, or with a tarpaulin "sou-wester;" a surtout of tanned sheepskin, that covered the arms and overlapped their woollen trousers; and stout sea-boots that reached up over the knees.

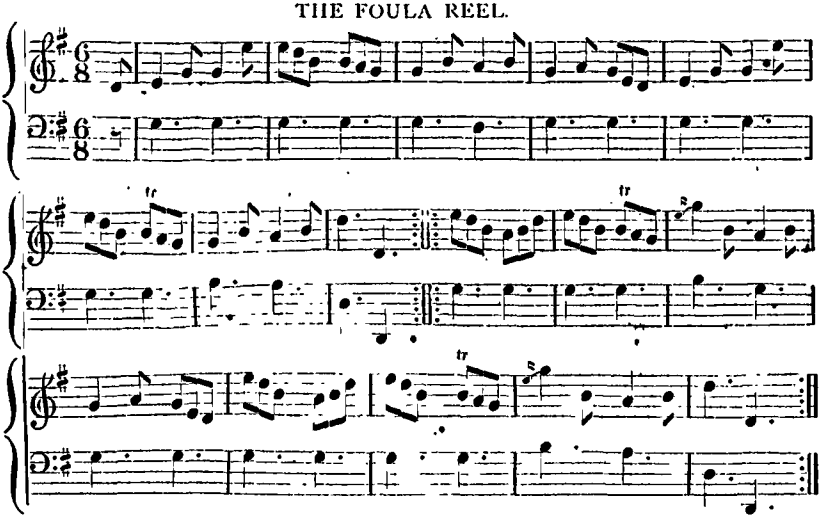
Christmas, or Yule Day, is the merriest and most welcome of all days in the year to the Shetlander. It is then only that anything like universal festivity is to be met with. The "Yule bottle," scarce seen throughout the year, is now passed about—all, from the hardiest to the tenderest, quaffing a glass of the festal drink. This is indulged in before breakfast and before dawn. Next appears breakfast, and disappears—still before daylight; and so sumptuous a table is never looked upon save on Christmas morn. Oatmeal cakes, bere-meal bannocks, and *bursten*

load the smiling board, with pork, dried mutton, fowl, and butter encircling the indispensable bottle and dram-glass. The "Yule fire," lit by the earliest riser, blazes gloriously, and all is good humour. Breakfast over, the young men and boys repair to the largest and smoothest piece of green in the parish, and spend the day at foot-ball. But about 1840, a period of religious revival in Shetland, the Yule festivities began to decline, the fiddle was proscribed, dancing prohibited, music (with the exception of hymn tunes), and all external manifestations of merriment, discouraged. There is an opinion in many country parishes, particularly among the old people, that every kind of music not sacred is sinful. To see how a Shetland Yule-day was kept in bygone days, we must go back to about 1830. At that time, as many peats were brought home from the hill on Christmas week as would last thirteen days, and every house had a "Yule stack." The fiddler (there were always two or three in every district) awakened the families in his neighbourhood, by playing the "Day Dawn" at the door. He was invited into every house, and received his dram, till about the time he had finished his rounds he could neither play nor sing. The late laird of Busta, a humane man, and an excellent landlord, had on his estate a blind fiddler with a large family, to whom he gave a house and croft, rent free, on condition that he awoke him every Yule morning playing the "Day Dawn" on the stair-head of his manor-house.

THE DAY DAWN.

Yule-day was wound up with a ball at night; the lads and lasses would meet in the roomiest house in the neighbourhood, and playing and dancing were kept up till midnight. One favourite air often danced to was the "Foula Reel," so expressive of the latent joyousness of the Shetland character.

THE FOULA REEL.



"Weel, since we are welcome to Yule, up wi't Lightfoot, link it awa', boys;
Send for a fiddler, play up Foula Reel; we'll skip as light as a maw, boys.

Chorus.

"The Shaalds of Foula will pay for a'—up wi't Lightfoot, link it awa', boys;
The Shaalds of Foula will pay for a', the Shaalds will pay for a', boys.

"The Awens are amang the cows in the byre—up wi't Lightfoot, link it awa', boys;
Link up the pot, and put on a gude fire; we'll sit till cocks do craw, boys.
The Shaalds of Foula, &c.

"Now for a light, and a pot of good beer up wi't Lightfoot, link it awa', boys;
We'll drink a gude fishing against the next year, and the Shaalds will pay for a', boys.
The Shaalds of Foula, &c."

Occasionally there would be a little home-brewed ale at these balls, but in general they were what are called "dry rants:" so keenly does the Shetlander relish the fiddle, that he will dance for hours without tasting anything more exhilarating than water. Yule-night without a ball or rant would have been deemed no Yule; indeed, there was a ball every week-night for twelve nights after.

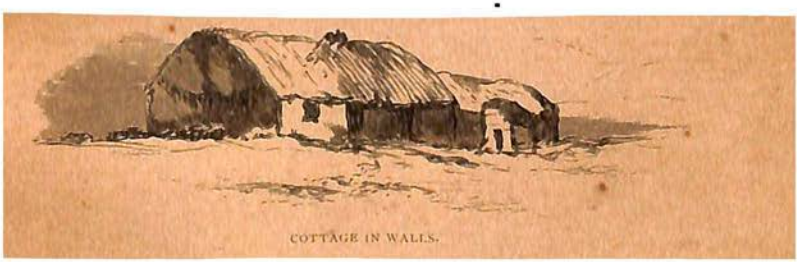
In the olden time, on the last night of the old year, five young lads, consisting of a "gentleman," a "carrying horse," and three others, all disguised, went from house to house, singing what they called a "New 'r Even's Song," and collecting provisions for a banquet on New Year's night. The "gentleman" wore a cap made of straw, with his name lettered on the front, a collar of straw round his neck, a belt of straw round his waist, and a band of straw round his right arm. It was his duty to sing, which he did standing outside the door; and when the song was finished,

if invited, he would enter the house and introduce himself as Vanderdigan come from Drontheim, pronounced Dronton. The following is the song, as remembered by an old dame in Shetland :—

"Gude new 'r even, gude new 'r night—St Mary's men are we;
We 're come here to crave our right—before our leddie.
"King Henry he 's a-huntin' gane,—St Mary's men are we,—
And ta'en wi' him his merry young men—before our leddie.
"I 'll tell ye how our lady was dressed,—St Mary's men are we,
If ye 'll gie me us some o' yer best—before our leddie.
"She had upon her weel-made head—St Mary's men are we
A crown of gold, an' it fu' braid—before our leddie.
"She had upon her middle sma'—St Mary's men are we—
A silver belt, an' it fu' bra'—before our leddie.
"She had upon her fingers ten—St Mary's men are we
Rings o' gold, fu' mony an ane—before our leddie.
"She had upon her weel-made feet—St Mary's men are we
Silver slippers, an' they fu' neat before our leddie.
"Gude man, gang in your gauin-geel—St Mary's men are we
An' gie 's a can or two o' ale—before our leddie.
"Gude wife, gang in your butter-kit—St Mary's men are we
An' gie 's a spoon or two o' it before our leddie.
"Likewise gang in your farrel-creel St Mary's men are we—
An' wale your farrels, an' wale them weel before our leddie.
"Our spoon is made o' cow's horn, St Mary's men are we,—
Open da door, an' let us in before our leddie.
"We 're standing here before da door, St Mary's men are we,
An' we 'll pass in before a score before our leddie."

The song is a very ancient one, a relic of Roman Catholic times, and was probably sung by the monks when on their New-Year begging excursions.

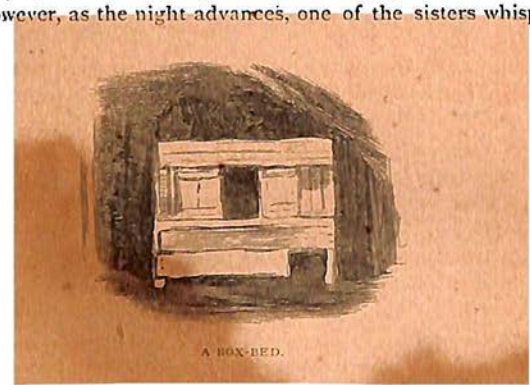
Before describing a Shetland wedding, we may step aside into a cottage by the banks of a quiet voe in the parish of Walls. The family of our humble heroine,



COTTAGE IN WALLS.

Mary, whom the occasion has invested with a temporary importance, is awaiting the visit of her Jamie, who is coming that night to "speer" for her. The house and its inmates are in the best of order; and while all are seated round the fire, a tap is heard at the door, which is opened by the youngest member of the family, who, by dint of listening and reasoning, has formed a pretty correct idea of what is about to take place. In walks Jamie, remarkably confused. He does not know what to say, or where to look; but if he can at all manage it, he makes an awkward sally on the floor, and slips a small bundle into a box-bed which stands opposite the door a bundle which everybody knows to be a bottle

of excellent whisky, the "speering bottle." He advances to the fire, and shakes hands with all except Mary, whom he does not seem to notice; while she, covered with blushes, does not seem to notice him. Tea over, every facility is put in his way for having an interview with the father; but he takes no hint, and appears blind to all the little plans and arrangements which Mary's sisters have made and are making. However, as the night advances, one of the sisters whispers to him,



A BOX-BED.

that if he "wants to speak to da," he would better do so now, as he has just gone to the barn to thrash the straw for the cow's supper. Go now he must; but when face to face with the man whose consent he must ask, his former awe of him having painfully increased, his mind becomes a blank, and he forgets every word of the neat little speech he had been prepared to deliver, and can only stammer out bluntly that he and Mary are going to marry, and he wishes to ask his consent. When the father consents, and wishes them many happy days, Jamie comes jumping out of the barn, feeling as light as if a hill had been rolled off his shoulders, and is for the remainder of the night the heartiest, happiest, chattiest fellow alive. The bottle is drunk at breakfast next morning (Sunday); and in a few hours the whole district is informed that "Jamie O'Houll speered for Mary O'Clingrigarth thestreen."

All weddings in Shetland must commence with new moon, otherwise the marriage will be an unlucky one. The week succeeding the "speering," after which the young couple are called bride and bridegroom, they proceed to Lerwick to purchase their "wedding needs." The bride's eldest brother, and the bridegroom's eldest sister, accompany them. Jamie is no miser on such on an occasion: he has, perhaps, had a successful season at Davis' Straits, or returned home from a voyage to Australia or California, and is in possession of money. He buys a white muslin dress, white shawl, and two beautiful caps, tastefully trimmed with ribbons, for his bride, with some "braw" for each of his and her sisters, and a suit for himself. He will think nothing of laying out £20 on his wedding. "It is a poor heart," he says, "that never rejoices; let the money go; as long as I keep my health, I have no fear." On Saturday, the bridegroom's family and friends meet by invitation at the house of the bride's father, to celebrate the "contract

feast." The bride awaits their arrival, and must kiss every invited guest as they enter. The sumptuous "tea" which follows, consists of bread, butter, and fresh mutton, two or three fat sheep having been killed that morning. The bottle is sent round freely. The night is spent in discussing the crops, the fishing, and the condition of the country in olden times. Tales of voyages and shipwrecks, and of hair-breadth escapes on returning from the haaf, are told; and after a late but plentiful supper, they separate.

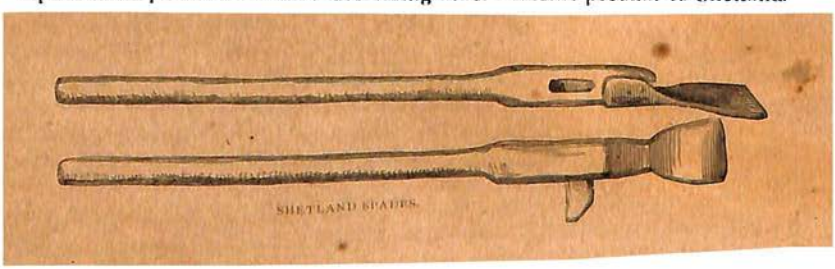
The wedding-even at the bride's house is a day of great bustle and preparation. Two women are employed from morning till morning baking oatmeal cakes—vast ones, about three feet in circumference, and cut in halves,—care being taken, in setting them on the wedding-table, to have their cut edges next the fire. The men are engaged in bringing home sheep from the hill, and slaughtering them; and the young women in cleaning up the house, and putting the finishing touches to their caps and dresses.

The "best man" must sleep with the bridegroom on the wedding-even. About six o'clock, the "aff-gang," or bridegroom's breakfast, is put on the table, and his men, who have been invited, assemble; and about the same time the bride's maidens, twelve or fifteen in number, meet at her house. Breakfast over at the bridegroom's (generally a work of three hours), he and his men walk to the bride's house, draw up in line before the door, and fire a shot. The door is shut, and no response is made. A second shot is fired; still silence. After a third shot, the door is opened, and the bride, leading all her maidens in single file, walks to the spot where the bridegroom and his men are standing, when every lad must kiss every lass. On re-entering the house, an ancient and peculiar custom is observed. The bride, with her maidens, on coming out of the house, does not walk direct to the spot where the bridegroom is standing, but turns to the left, and goes so as to form a half-circle, following the course of the sun; and on re-entering, the circle is completed. Observing an order of procession as old as the hills, they walk to the manse. There is a married couple at every wedding called the "honest folk," whose duty it is to walk before the bride and bridegroom in procession, and attend to the comforts of the whole company. There is also a fiddler, who walks at the head of the procession on every occasion, playing energetically. On the conclusion of the ceremony, which is generally performed in the manse kitchen, the "honest man" goes round with a bottle of wine or brandy, offering each of the company a glass, and the "honest woman" follows with a basket of biscuit or cake. There is always a "gunner" in every company; and on returning from the manse, shots are fired as fast as the gun can be loaded, while with every shot there issues from the throat of each man a vociferous "hip—hip—hurrah." As they approach the bride's house, her mother and one or two female relatives meet her, carrying in a clean white cambric napkin a cake baked with seeds and sugar, called the "bride's-cake," or "dreaming-bread," broken into small pieces, which she throws over the head of the bride.

Dinner is now on the table—a dinner, I believe, peculiar to Shetland weddings. The fire has been removed from the centre of the floor, and the table, formed of

chests, extends the whole length of the house, and is covered with white cotton. The dinner consists of a savoury dish of "stove," made of five or six fat newly-slaughtered sheep, cut into small pieces with an axe, and boiled in the largest "kettle" in the neighbourhood: it is seasoned with salt, pepper, and carraway seeds, and served boiling hot in huge dishes, around each of which are laid a number of cow's-horn spoons. The company are seated each opposite his own partner; grace is said; and fortunate is he who has secured a spoon with a long handle, since in a few minutes the short-handled ones become encased in a mass of mutton-fat. Oat-cakes are eaten along with the "stove," and a glass of whisky concludes the repast. Tea, or the "bride's piece," is generally over about six o'clock: the floor is cleared, the fiddler is elevated on the top of a chest, and dancing commences. About nine o'clock, commotion and whispering being observed among those nearest the door, the fiddler stops, dancing ceases, and the "honest man" informs the company that the "guisers" have arrived. On the best man announcing that there is plenty of both meat and drink for all comers—five gallons of whisky it may be yet untouched—the fiddler is told to "play up the guisers' spring," when in walks a tall, slender-looking man, called the "scuddler," his face closely veiled with a white cambric napkin, and on his head a cap made of straw, in shape like a sugar-loaf, with three loops at the upper extremity, filled with ribbons of every conceivable hue, and hanging down so as nearly to cover the cap. He wears a white shirt, with a band of ribbons around each arm, and a bunch of ribbons on each shoulder, with a petticoat of long clean straw, called "gloy," which hangs loosely. The moment he enters he gives a snore, and having danced for a few minutes, another enters, called the "gentleman," somewhat similarly attired: he, too, having danced, a third, called the "fool," appears, and so on till all are in. And it is really a strange sight to see six tall young men dressed thus fantastically, and dancing with so much earnestness. They are careful to speak not a word lest they reveal their identity; and not a sound is heard but the music of the fiddle, the rustle of the straw petticoats, the thud of their feet on the earthen floor, the laughter of the "fool," and the whispers of the bride's maidens guessing who the guisers may be. Dancing is kept up by the company till far on in the small hours, and supper is at last announced—a simple repast of sowans and milk; after which they retire for the night. About ten A.M. they reassemble, have breakfast, walk in procession for two or three hours, take dinner, and then finally separate.

Space alone precludes us from describing other customs peculiar to Shetland.



Glossary.

Broughs or Burghs—The remains of ancient fortifications, of which there are many in these islands.

Burstin—Barley (always called *bere*), roasted in a kettle over the fire, instead of being dried in a kiln.

Baas—Sunken rocks, observed only in bad weather, when the sea breaks over them.

Brunnies—Large thick cakes, made of meal.

Budie—A basket, made of docken stalks dried and beaten flat.

Daffock—A small wooden pail.

Dilo—A narrow opening between cliffs.

Gauin-geel—Ale-kirn.

Holm—A small island.

Farrel-creel—Cake-basket.

Keyshie—A creel made of plaited straw. It is carried on the back, and is much used for conveying fuel from the peat-hill.

Moorit—A light brown—the colour of many of the native sheep, now becoming rare.

Noup—A lofty headland, precipitous seaward, and sloping landward.

Noust—A landing-place for boats.

Pillock—The coal-fish a year old, afterwards called "saith." This fish is very abundant throughout the Islands. In its earlier stages it forms a staple article of diet, and in its full-grown condition is largely exported.

Plantie-cruive—A small enclosure for growing cabbage. "The liberal custom of the country permits any person, who has occasion for such convenience, to select out of the unenclosed moorland a small patch, which he surrounds with a drystone wall, and cultivates as a kail-yard, till he exhausts the soil with cropping, and then he deserts it, and encloses another."—Note A to the "Pirate."

Rooing—Plucking the wool off the sheep's back, instead of shearing it; which explains the remarkable appearance presented by the native sheep when they are to be met only half-plucked the remainder being left till it is fit for rooing.

Scatthold—Ground for pasture, common to a number of tenants.

Stack—A lofty precipitous rock.

Stour—Great.

Sheltie—Shetland ponies.

The Drows, or Trows—"The legitimate successors of the northern duergar, and, somewhat allied to the faeries, reside like them in the interior of green hills and caverns, and are most powerful at midnight." Note K to the "Pirate."

Tushkar—An iron instrument with a wooden handle, used for cutting peats.

Tirl—The water-wheel, which in the Zetland mills is placed diagonally.

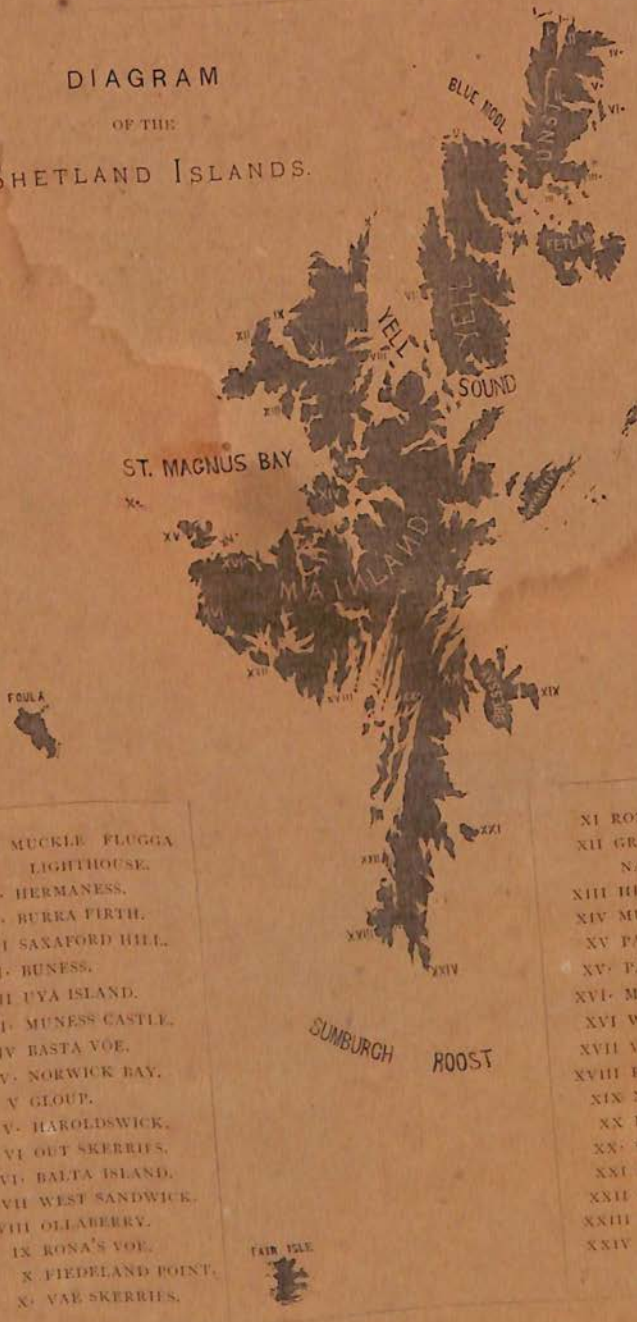
Ward (sometimes called "Guard")—The summit of a high hill, such as might afford a look-out in times of danger.

Those wishing to become acquainted with Shetland words, and their probable derivations, will find a goodly collection in Edmondston's "Glossary of the Shetland and Orkney Dialect," (1866, A. & C. Black.)

DIAGRAM

OF THE

SHETLAND ISLANDS.



I MUCKLE FLUGGA LIGHTHOUSE.
I. HERMANESS.
I. BURRA FIRTH.
II SAXAFORD HILL.
II. BUNESS.
III UYA ISLAND.
III. MUNESS CASTLE.
IV BASTA VOE.
IV. NORWICK BAY.
V GLOUP.
V. HAROLDSWICK.
VI OUT SKERRIES.
VI. BALTA ISLAND.
VII WEST SANDWICK.
VIII OLLABERRY.
IX RONA'S VOE.
X FIEDELAND POINT.
X. VAE SKERRIES.

XI RONA'S HILL.
XII GRIND OF THE NAVIR.
XIII HILLSWICK.
XIV MUCKLE ROE.
XV PAPA STOUR.
XV. PAPA SOUND.
XVI. MELBY.
XVI WATSNESS.
XVII VAILA ISLAND.
XVIII REAWICK.
XIX NOSS.
XX LERWICK.
XX. SCALLOWAY.
XXI MOUSA.
XXII ST NINIAN.
XXIII FITFUL HEAD.
XXIV SUMBURGH.

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